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S E A - S P R A Y :

A

LONG ISLAND VILLAGE.

BY

MARTHA WICKHAM.



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By MRS. M. D. ROCKWELL,

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To My Clerical Friend:

STOLED steward of God's mysteries! to whom blest charge is given
To guide, with gentle voice and hand, the truant home to Heaven,
Go watch for souls; to win and wear (so God thine efforts bless),
His jewelled crown, who many turns from sin to righteousness.
To thee! blest bearer of good news, 'mid sorrow's chequered scenes,
This mite, from one who "would do more, but that her head lacks means."



SEA-SPRAY.

CHAPTER I.

WINTER, I love thy grandeur ; thy stern voice
Is full of solemn music unto me,
Waking long buried memories ; I rejoice
Thy dark and tempest-telling clouds to see,
Lifting their giant wings in the far North,
Or sailing on their fearful errands forth ;
While cold winds waken'd from their caverned sleep
Goad the vex'd billows, till, with maddening leap,
In bellowing rage, " Deep calleth unto Deep."

THE last rosy flush of a surpassingly bland and beautiful day in December, fell over the little village of Sea-spray. The sun had set, but the western sky was yet glowing with floods of golden light, and the whole clear expanse, above and around, was bright in the softly fading gleam.

It was a pleasant hour—that quiet interval between daylight and darkness ; and it was a pleasant village, too, that now lay dozing in its soothing glimmer. There was nothing remarkable in the simple, unpretending village of Sea-spray, which stretched itself about a mile from the Atlantic shore, on the eastern extremity of Long Island : the main street lying in a little miniature valley, the rise on either side being

so slight as to be scarcely perceptible. There was nothing picturesque in the surrounding scenery: the fields lay in one flat, unbroken level, and there was neither a brook nor a rock within an hour's travel of the street; but the dash of the eternal wave was always sounding amid its solitudes, and the solemn and monotonous roar had, perchance, had its influence in subduing and sobering the spirits of the inhabitants, and imparting to their characters that quiet, unimpulsive sluggishness, for which, more than anything else, they were distinguished.

Stretched far away into the ocean, shut out by their isolated position from any entangling or exciting relations with the busy, bustling world around them, the villagers pursued quietly and contentedly their own usual avocations, and dreamed away a harmless and noiseless existence; dwelling soberly where their fathers had dwelt, treading patiently the paths their fathers' steps had beaten, tilling the same fields, sheltered by the same roofs, believing in the same stern creed, worshiping in the same gray old temple, and finally lying down in death almost in the same green graves. Still there was a beauty and a charm in their unobtrusive simplicity, in their perfect innocence of all new-fangled improvements, in their pertinacious faith in windmills, and devout abhorrence of steam and all its noisy abominations.

There was fear now, however, that the spirit of innovation had begun to creep stealthily among them; the "brushing up" mania had broken out here and there, and in several places along the street snug little edifices might be seen, in all the gloss and glory of fresh paint and side-lights, staring pertly at their grim gray old neighbors across the way, and turning up their puggish little portico noses in defiant scorn of the long, low, rickety roofs that confronted

them ; barns had marched sullenly back from the front line, and wood-piles had retired indignantly to the rear, to give place to painted pickets and ornamental shrubbery.

Steamboats, railroads and turnpikes had brought the world nearer, and the restless, itinerating tendency of the times had brought troops of seekers after change to explore all the sweet secluded nooks and shady retreats of Sea-spray, and to claim and take possession by right of discovery. But those who came to rusticate and rest—to breathe the pure sea air—to forget the stifling city heats in the blessed ocean breeze, and bathe the fevered brow and the languid limb in the dashing ocean wave, had fled with the flowers and the singing summer birds ; and the deserted haunts of the summer loungers were silent now, save when the fallen leaves rustled along the paths, or the wintry wind moaned through the bare branches of the trees. It was evening, calm and serene, and no sound disturbed the silence, except the sharp stroke of an axe in the distance, busy in thrifty forecast for to-morrow's fuel, or the slow groaning wheel of a loaded wagon, late on its homeward way.

"This is a lovely evening," said Leena Hesselten, as she drew her chair to the fireside, and laid down her book ; "but I can see to read no longer, so I shall just lounge here awhile in idleness, and enjoy the twilight."

"I wonder," said Alice, "what has become of all our neighbors ? I should think this bright pleasant weather would tempt some of them out."

The outer door turned softly on its hinges, and a light, cautious step was heard in the passage.

"That's Milly, I know by the step," said Leena, turning toward the door opening upon the front entrance of the house, as a light, graceful figure glided into the room.

"Are you alone?" asked the visiter, in a low, timid voice, as the sisters turned to greet her.

"We are," said Alice, "and just wishing for company to help us enjoy this quiet hour. How very mild and pleasant it is!"

"Isn't it?" replied the visitor, in her peculiar phraseology, a sort of confirmative interrogatory. "Isn't it? It don't do as if it could be winter, does it?"

"Nevertheless," said Leena, laughingly, "I suppose this *is* winter; but we must give the old gentleman credit—he has walked in very peaceably, and behaved himself thus far very becomingly. I am suspicious, with all his blarney, that he will be at his old tricks before spring."

"I don't like such unseasonable weather, though," said Milly; "it seems unnatural, and makes me feel gloomy. There is something spring-like in it; and I always feel sad and lonesome-like when the days begin to lengthen and soften in the spring. I have heard you remark, Leena, that you experienced the same feeling."

"I do," answered Leena. "If I ever knew anything like melancholy, it is in the advancing spring, when the first early birds come, and the frogs begin to peep on the marshes. I don't know by what association the feeling is awakened, but my thoughts turn back to my happy school days and their companions, and I feel sad and solitary. In the fall, on the contrary, which others consider the season of gloom, I enjoy life best; there is more zest in our snug quiet home comforts, when we draw around a blazing fire, shut the door upon outside troubles, and draw our enjoyments from home and its pleasant resources."

"Well, Leen, you've made quite a speech before this meeting," said Alice, "and now, shall I tell Dury to bring in the lights?"

"Weather-breeder, Miss Milly," said Dury, with a solemn shake of the head, as she deposited the lamps on the table.

"Do you think so, Dury?" said Milly.

"Never knowd it to fail," said Dury, laconically, as she moved solemnly out of the room.

"Dury sees awful portents in everything pleasant, and if she could, would croak the sunshine off the earth," said Alice, unrolling her knitting-work. "She has firm faith in weather breeders, as she calls them, and I should be sorry to quarrel with poor Dury's philosophy, for I am not sure that faith in omens is not pleasanter than no faith at all; at any rate, she brooks no slight upon her sayings or doings?"

Conversation went gaily on for some time: the weather, the markets, the fashions, the little matters of local and neighborhood interest; sometimes wandering away upon solemn and serious subjects, with sad and tearful reminiscences of past years and buried friends; then turning cheerfully back to lighter themes, to plans for the future of business or pleasure, to anticipated visits from, and pleasant reunions with, distant and dear friends, mingled with droll jokes and characteristic snatches of humor, amusing, if only for their grotesque absurdity.

After an hour or two spent in pleasant chat, the visitor began to make manifestations of her intent to leave. Her stay being too short to be called a visit, and too uncereemonious to be dignified with the appellation of a call, was, what in Sea-spray parlance was designated a "run in between lights;" one of these cosy, snug little gossiping interviews, so peculiarly pleasant in a social and friendly community of lifetime acquaintanceship. So, in spite of earnest entreaties to "stay a little longer," Millicent Hen-

shaw rose, saying she had been too long idle, and must go home to her sewing.

As she opened the outer door, an angry gust swept past her, and told of a sudden and total change of weather. Stopping, with her hand on the lock, she called to her friends by the fireside—

“Well now, you shall come to the door and look out. I guess there’s no mistake this time. Dury’s right—you never saw such a change; the sky is all overcast, and the wind blowing almost a gale from the southeast. It is dark and squally, and I guess the storm will come down heavy enough before morning.”

“Is it very dark, Milly?” asked Alice, from her seat by the fire.

“Well, I should think it was; aint it though?” said Milly, as she closed the door.

“Do you think it will storm before morning, papa?” asked Alice of her father, Col. Hesselten, who came in from his business at the close of the evening.

“There are strong indications of it now,” replied the Colonel. “The wind is piping up spitefully in the southeast, and the clouds are heaving up black and heavy: it has come up very suddenly, and, I think, will do up its work quickly. Well,” said he, glancing round the comfortable appointments of his well-ordered and pleasant home, “we shan’t feel it much; we have enough of everything at hand, to keep cold and hunger from our hearth for a day or two, at any rate, and no reason to fear that a storm, if it comes, can materially inconvenience us or ours.”

An answering blast swept against the window as if in mocking reply, bringing with it a crashing torrent of rain. Then there was a lull, a fearful pause, while the angry ele-

ments gathered strength for a wilder rush, and again it came down with startling and terrible violence.

"This is a wild night for vessels on the coast," said Col. Hesselten, pacing the room uneasily. He turned to the window and peered into the darkness; then resumed his walk, with his hands crossed behind him, whistling softly a slow, solemn measure, and timing his steps in unison.

The evening had worn away: nine, ten, eleven o'clock had chimed out, but the storm had abated nothing of its fury. The lights had disappeared from the dwellings along the street, and darkness, deep and dreary, wrapped the little village.

The storm continued to beat with unabated fury upon the windows, and howl around the house; but the inmates slept unharmed, till the old town clock had told off the hours far into the morning watches, when a louder and startling sound boomed out above the blast—another—another—and another.

"Hark, Leena! did you hear those guns?" said Alice, springing out of bed; "there must be some vessel on shore—they were signals of distress. God help them, or in such a storm as this they must perish." Again and again came that useless appeal, that unavailing cry for help, where human hands were powerless to save, and human efforts would be put forth in vain.

"Let us make our fire and dress ourselves," said Alice; "it will soon be light, and we shall sleep no more. There it goes again! Oh, this is dreadful; will it ever be light?" said she, in impatient agitation. "Sit down, and compose yourself," said Leena, quietly lacing her gaiters; "it is useless to distress yourself about a thing utterly beyond your power to remedy. If it is possible to render them any

assistance, you may be sure it will be promptly done. I am certain no aid can reach them now."

"Guess Miss Leena and Miss Alice gin to think old squaw knows sun-thin now," said Dury, with a little exultation in her tone, as she came in with some wood for their fire. "Aint knowd sich a storm as this in iver so long."

"Yes, Dury," said Leena, "I am beat this time."

"I knowd 'twould come"—and Dury withdrew to build her own fire in the kitchen.

The day, now dark and dismal, began to dawn; but it was day at last, and objects out of doors began to be dimly visible. Then came the tramp of hurrying feet, the roll of wheels, the rapid rush of horsemen; and the bell sent forth its unwonted peal from the old church tower amid that howing blast. Shout answered shout; doors opened, and heads looked out from upper windows; while in all directions was heard the eager question, and the hasty, brief reply. The horn for the surf-boats bellowed its trumpet-like call, and answering to its summons, the sturdy and strong-limbed men who composed their crews began to muster.

In a short space of time the intelligence had reached every dwelling in the village, and spread among the little hamlets in the vicinity, that a stately ship was stranded, and lay helplessly weltering amid the breakers, directly opposite the street.

Of course every body was astir: curiosity, cupidity, duty or sympathy called them forth, to see, to gain, to act, and to relieve.

Fearless of the storm, school-boys flung aside their books, and heedless of the tinkling of the little cracked bell, that groaned and creaked in its spasmodic efforts to

ring, rushed eagerly to the beach. Grave, home-keeping men shoved back the scarcely tasted breakfast, laid down the last mail's unread newspaper, and with storm-coat and comforter carefully adjusted, ventured out among the bustle, to do all they could in the way of suggestion, or calm and prudent advice. Little, indeed, could be done beyond looking on; for the rashest madness would never have prompted the launching a boat in those wild, rolling billows. With the ready forethought, however, of men accustomed to such scenes, the inhabitants of Sea-spray went quietly and promptly to make arrangements for availing themselves of the earliest possible chance for communicating with those on board the ill-fated vessel, and relieving them, if possible, from their perilous position.

Whale boats were drawn down to the water's edge, and carefully scrutinized, that no possible mishap might occur from neglect or unseen flaw; oars were brought out and examined, and ropes uncoiled and stretched, ready for emergencies. In the meantime, day had advanced; and, almost unheeded by the earnest workers on the beach, absorbed and excited by their important preparations, the wind had hauled a little more to the south, and abated somewhat of its violence.

Not long did so favorable a circumstance escape the notice of the anxious waiters on the beach; and many eager voices at once gave utterance to the hope that the storm would ere long give way.

"I think," said Captain Hull, a stout built, muscular seaman, bronzed and seasoned to all sorts of rough weather, by many years' service in command of a whaler—"I think the weather is working southerly, and will soon come round to the fair weather point."

"Yes," replied Captain Melton, to whom the remark was addressed; "but these short southeasters are apt to chop suddenly round to the northwest, and come out with a furious blow from that quarter."

"Wall, that may be, tew," said a weather-beaten old fisherman from the north shore; "but I kinder reckon, eff it don't blow tew obstropolous, that are'll be the sort to knock down the surf."

"Very true," said a small, energetic, well-knit, but light-limbed young man, with a speaking trumpet in his hand; "but we can't wait for the northwest wind to help us. I am bound to reach that vessel as soon as it is possible for a boat to live in the surf, if I can get a crew for love or money to join me."

"I don't weigh my life in the balance against money, Captain Hardy," quietly replied Melton, "but I will take an oar in the first boat that wets her bows in that attempt."

"I didn't doubt your skill or your courage," answered Hardy, pleasantly, "nor your generous readiness to exercise them in such a case as this; but you know I feel impatient, because you know," added he, a little proudly, "what is a volunteered service on your part, which you can tender or not, as you choose, is a sworn duty with me, which, at any risk, I must and will perform."

"Very good," replied Melton, "I fully understand all that; and I repeat that, without intending to give my countenance to any rash trifling with life, I am ready when you are."

"Don't you think, Captain, you can make yourself heard now? The storm has worn itself out almost, and I should think your voice would reach them," said Captain

Hull, rising from his lounging attitude on the beach, and shaking off the wet sand that clung to his garments.

"I will try," replied the person appealed to; and raising the trumpet to his lips, he put the question—

"What cheer on board?"

The deep tones rose clear and loud on the beach, and eager listeners held their breath for the response—but no answer came. No voice of man could make its accents intelligible above the deafening thunders of that leaping and terrible flood.

"Can you make out anything of her character?" asked a gentleman, who, from his dress and air, was easily identified as the clergyman of the parish.

"Not much, sir," replied Hardy, who had been for some time scanning the strange visitor through his glass. "She rolls so, and is so enveloped in mist and spray, that little can be seen. I think there are many people on board, and I judge from the manœuvres that they are anxious to open some communication with the shore."

"Do you think it can be done?" asked the clergyman, anxiously.

"It can't be done, Mr. Alden," said Hardy, decidedly.

"Do you think they are in imminent danger where they are?" pursued Mr. Alden.

"Well," said Hardy, musingly, as if not prepared or willing to risk an opinion, "that depends upon the strength of her build. That sea would try any timbers. They are safe enough if they can have patience to wait; and she can hold together under the strain. Of that they can judge best. Anyhow, their only helper now is God. Mortal man is powerless here," said the kind-hearted wreck-master, solemnly, as he reverentially uncovered his head.

The clergyman sighed, as he turned to look with tearful eyes upon the object of so much anxious and earnest interest. "They must be very uncomfortable," he resumed, turning again to speak to Hardy.

"Doubtless they are," replied his auditor, thoughtfully, looking wistfully along the beach as he spoke. "Here are men enough to man more boats than we can muster, all strong at hand and full of strength, waiting, and willing to do and to dare all that men can do; but what's the use. I say, Melton," said he, with a little spice of impatience in his tone, calling to his cool, quiet neighbour, "this is blamed trying to a man's feelings, to stand idly looking on, while his fellow-creatures perish almost within reach of his hand. Can we do anything?"

"We can wait," said Melton, calmly—too calmly, it would seem, for his fiery and ardent interrogator, who turned quickly away, and joined a group ranged around a boat, as if impatient to launch and make an attempt to reach the wreck.

"She seems, as far as I can judge, a staunch craft, and I think they will be wise enough to keep still," said an experienced and sensible man from the street, who had been all his life accustomed to "long shore" fishing, and as much at home in a whale-boat as in his bed, and could breast the billows like a duck. "But I should not wonder if you see some of them trying their strength with the breakers before long. Men can't stand still a great while, very patiently, with death dashing over them, and solid land so near."

"I think, Hardy," said Hull, with a stretch and yawn, "this waiting here is dull work; and, as I know there will be no going off till the tide is down, and the weather a little more settled, I will go up to my dinner."

"Go, then," said Hardy, "and swallow it quick, if you mean to see the first landing made from that ship. I have lounged here doing nothing long enough, and I think you know me well enough to know that I am no slow boat."

"I know very well," said Hull, good naturedly, "that you are always ready to act before others have begun to think; but I don't believe you will be fool-hardy enough to risk your life in this surf before I get back: and I shall eat my dinner without choking or scalding myself. Can I bring you anything? Shall I carry any message to your folks at home?"

"Well thought of, Hull. Yes—tell them to send down somebody with everything they can muster to eat, and a kettle of coffee. Your talk about dinner reminds me that I came off without any breakfast. By the way, Hull, can't you ask some of these men, from Snarlville, home with you to dinner? They can't go home, you know; and the work we have before us is not one to be done on an empty stomach."

"Yes, yes," said Hull, laughing, "I will feed all I can, and billet the rest upon the neighbors."

So saying, he walked quickly away, and soon disappeared behind the banks which separated the sandy beach from the marshes, and loamy, arable lands beyond.

One by one the lookers-on departed, to dine and warm themselves in happy homes, and by glowing hearth-stones; and few remained on the beach, except those whom duty or interest detained.

Yes—interest even here! for, though the noblest efforts of human strength were cheerfully put forth on occasions like this; though the most chivalrous forgetfulness of self

and selfish inducements, and the boldest and bravest endurance of fatigue, and danger, and toil, without thought of remuneration, or expectation of profit and reward, were things of common occurrence; and though not a man in all that motley assemblage would have shrunk back from any exertion, or expenditure of time or strength to rescue their fellow-creatures from situations of peril; still, the excitement over, they would work as untiringly and as faithfully for pay. And why not? If they had frames of iron and sinews of steel, why should they encounter wind and wave, cold, hunger and toil, and privation of rest, to save wealth for the wealthy, and to snatch from the merciless waters treasures with which they could never be enriched.

So they waited and watched, and bided their time; not for plunder—God forbid such a thought, for the sturdy farmers of Sea-spray were honest, yes, honest, noble-hearted men, and untold wealth might have been strewn on their shore, and they would have guarded it as their own, and rendered an account of their stewardship, even to the uttermost farthing. This of the community as a community.

There are frail and fallen sons of humanity everywhere. There are those who have felt the principles of honesty, which they would gladly have cherished, withering before the pinching pressure of poverty. There are those who have gone down in the indulgence of vicious propensities, till they have fallen below the reach of all promptings of their better natures; and there are some, perhaps, of that unfortunate moral malformation, who do evil by instinct, and who have never been under the guidance of any restraining or elevating principle.

There is, in truth, no spot on all this bright and beautiful earth, however secluded and sheltered it may seem, over which the "trail of the serpent" has not swept, with the blighting and blackening touch of sin; and, alas for sweet Sea-spray, it was not so far out of the way, that sin had not found out the road, and led sorrow along with her.

So they watched and waited, the trusty and the true :—there was need of it.

CHAPTER II.

"ALLY," said Leena, "the rain is over, and the wind has fallen ; it is decidedly better weather, and I am going to the beach, for I can't rest at home."

"Do you think it will be exactly prudent for us to go out in such a raw, damp day as this?" inquired Alice.

"I shall risk the peril for the sake of the pleasure," responded Leena ; "and I wish to know, before I go, what is the state of our larder, for we shall very likely have some of these people thrown upon our hospitality. Allen says he thinks there are passengers, probably quite a number, and they will need care and kindness, if they ever reach the land to receive it. So let's call in Dury, and hold a caucus."

"Wha's Miss Ally want?" said Dury, opening the door, and suffering nothing to enter but her head, which was enveloped in a quilted flannel hood ; "cause I'm roasting coffee, and I can't come."

"Well, then we will come out there, for we want to consult you a little. You see, Dury," said Alice, sitting down on a basket of chips in the kitchen corner, and preparing herself to quiet (by a little skilful diplomacy) anticipated disaffection in the kitchen cabinet, "we are going to the Beach."

Dury looked disapprobation, but she stirred her coffee energetically, and listened.

"We are going to the Beach, and I wish to ask your advice as to what we had better do in case we bring any company home with us—as we intend to do if we choose," continued she, firmly, in reply to sundry twitches and jerks strongly indicative of a desire to rebel. "Now, what have you got in the pantry?"

"Little enough, the mercy knows," groaned Dury. "I don't see what Miss Ally wants to bring in'body here for, you know iv think's scace and dreffle dear."

"Yes, I know, Dury; but then you know, too, when the Lord sends mouths he sends meat."

"I'd rother he'd send butter," said Dury, doggedly—"we've got meat enough."

"Well, well; never mind the butter, Dury, no doubt it will come. Money, you know, opens cellar doors."

"Come! yes, it 'll come, I suppose, for two shillings a pound; but where it's goneter come from at that, 's moren I know. If Miss Ally knows, mebby she'll tell."

"I don't know," said Alice, laughing; "but you know, Dury, where there is not knowledge there must be trust."

"Trust, su' enough! That's great! I won'er if Miss Ally don't know 't they allus charge more when we gits little notions on trust?"

"I did not mean credit at the stores, Dury; I meant trust in Providence," said Alice, subduing her inclination to laugh, for she felt that they were trenching on sacred things.

"Guh! that's what you mean, uh? I 'spect to trust in Providence in sickness and trouble, and sich times. I niver knowd how't I could trouble Providence for a pound a' butter."

"It is a small matter indeed, Dury, to trouble even ourselves about; but it is well for you and me, that nothing He has made is too small to meet his notice, or be protected by his care."

"Well, I niver meant nothin', Miss Ally; go 'long to the Beach if you wants ter. I guess old squaw 'll find suthink to eat for all as comes. Bundle up well, and don't stay too long and scatch yer death."

Dury toddled off to grind her coffee, and Leena and Alice, well cloaked and wrapped and hooded, walked briskly toward the Beach.

Nothing had been done when they arrived. The shore was again thronged with anxious spectators. The swell had subsided, so as to allow a better view of the ship, and of the proceedings on her deck. It was evident that great excitement and alarm prevailed on board, and that some difference of opinion with regard to the feasibility of effecting a landing existed among the officers and passengers.

"I think," said Lester Bennet, the kind-hearted and fatherly old fisherman, fixing his keen, twinkling little black eyes long and searchingly on the vessel, now lying a little more quietly as the heaving waves abated—"I think I see wimmin kind yender. That are flutterin' can't mean nothin' but female furbelows. It's a coarse beach she's made for sich tender critturs. It's my mind it'll be a mercy eff they iver tread God's arth."

The old man shaded his eyes, while the prayer of a gentle and affectionate heart went silently up for the helpless and suffering strangers, thus standing in their dread necessity before him.

"They are making preparations to send a man off," said Hardy. "I think it will be a life uselessly thrown away. I will hail again. Possibly I may reach them now."

Again the question was put : " What's your situation ?"

Then came the thrilling reply : " Desperate ! For God's sake, help us, if you can !"

" Speak them again, Hardy. Urge them to keep quiet. We can save them, if they will have patience."

" The tide is falling, and I, for one, am willing to venture," said Captain Hull.

Again sounded the trumpet : " Keep cool. We are coming off. Can you keep back your men ?"

" Save our women and children ; our men must take care of themselves," was the prompt and proud reply.

" That are's the right sperit. That's the chap for me. That feller's got the true stuff in him—blamed eff he aint," said Lester, throwing up his head, by way of testifying his hearty approval.

The boat was now silently made ready, and one by one these brave, devoted men stepped out to guide her. There was no levity now. It was no time for jest or merriment ; but there was firm, unfaltering fixedness of will, cool, calm courage, in that solemn hour. And was there not need of it ? Amid that breathless crowd were gentle, loving women, looking on, with pallid brows, and hearts that almost ceased to beat ; there were caressed and petted children, with pale parted lips, and earnest anxious eyes ;—kindred, neighbors, and friends, watching to see husbands, fathers, brothers, put forth into that waste of boiling, bellowing waves.

" Hull," said Hardy, " we shall put you in the bows."

Hull hesitated. " Well," said he, at length, " as well me as anybody. Perhaps Melton has a cooler head."

" Neither a cooler head, a stouter heart, nor a steadier hand," said Melton, calmly. " I will go where the others think best."

"Take the leading oar, then," said Hull. "Now, where's Bill Melton? He pulls an oar with a skilful hand."

"Here, close at your elbow, and ready for work. Where else should he be?" replied the young Captain called for.

"And Shumway?"

"All ready, with his sleeves rolled up," was the cheerful response.

"Now for the ropes. This is no summer sport you are fixing for," said an anxious neighbor of the gallant young men engaged in the perilous enterprise; and careful hands fastened the long and strong ropes around their waists, ready to be hauled upon in case of disaster.

"Are we all ready?" asked Hull.

"One moment, if you please," said Melton, calmly, but solemnly. "We know that we are going forth with our lives in our hands. Knowing this, I trust we all go willingly. Friends and neighbors, let us be sure that we are going with no motives in our hearts, which we should fear to take in our right hands before the bar of God."

He lifted his hat and looked towards the clergyman. In a moment every head was bowed, and the pastor lifted his hands in prayer. It was a scene beautiful in its terrific sublimity.

That mighty vessel, with its gigantic hull and towering masts, looning up against that sombre back-ground; that black, leaden sky; that seemingly limitless expanse of rolling waters, roaring, and plunging, and foaming in their tempestuous wrath; that pale and silent multitude, with bowed, uncovered heads, while the voice of prayer went up, flowing in earnest and ardent tones from a heart stirred to its inmost depths, and sending its pleading and powerful

cry for mercy and deliverance in gushing and unstudied eloquence over those pale and quivering lips.

The boat was shoved into the water, ready hands helping to drag her off and steady her on her way. Not a word was spoken. There was no need of orders, or cautions from one to another. Each one knew his own place and his own powers; each one knew full well that on his own skill and coolness depended his own life: so they struggled on, mounting the waves, and sternly looking danger and death in the face. As they neared the ship a deafening cheer went up from deck and shrouds, and pale and anxious faces bent down to hail them, while from the shore straining eyes and throbbing hearts followed them.

"Do you think they will be able to reach the ship, Uncle Lester?" asked little Allen Hesselten of the old man, standing silently by his side.

"Bless your dear little soul, boy, I hope so; but it's a resky trick, in the best of weather, to put a boat through them are breakers. The Lord have mercy!" suddenly exclaimed the old man, lifting and clasping his hands, "they'll be *swamped*—sure, sartin, they'll be *swamped*. Look t'other way, boy—look t'other way; that's a sight to blind your young eyes." And, laying his hands on the shoulders of the pale, trembling boy, he turned his face from the sea.

Oh, the untold anguish that was crowded into that little speck on the great ocean of time! The suffering, never-to-be-forgotten, endured in that moment of fear and suspense! But it passed; it was lost in the thrill of joyful relief, as the little boat was again descried riding the wave, and in close proximity to the ship. A rope was thrown by a steady hand, and caught by those in the boat.

"You must keep back your men, or we shall come no

nearer," shouted Hull; "if they rush upon us we are lost, and your chance is over."

"My men are under good discipline," replied a pleasant, but powerful voice; "and if they were not, I have arguments here to enforce my authority, and prove I am in earnest." And he calmly unbuttoned his blouse, and displayed pistol and dagger glistening in his belt.

"How many can you take with safety?" inquired the speaker, evidently the commander of the stranded ship.

"Not many the first time," replied Hardy, "till we have tried our strength a little. How are you situated—all tight and staunch as yet?"

"Not so badly off as I at first apprehended; the water does not gain on us very fast; and, if you can take off these terrified women and children, I think I and my sturdy boys can manage to keep our heads above water."

While this brief conversation was going on, the hands had not been idle, and arrangements had been made for lowering the trembling and timid mothers, and their clinging, helpless little ones, into the boat. It was a frightful and difficult work, but it was carefully and skilfully done.

"We can take two more if you are quick," said Hull.

"Evelyn," said the Captain, turning kindly and deferentially to a tall gentleman of dignified and commanding appearance—the centre of an interesting group. He paused. How could he part that father from the dependent and fragile beings that clung to him? Yet, life was at stake. Lives more than theirs—lives that had been nobly risked to rescue them.

"Evelyn, they can take two more. What say you?"

"Go, Ada—go, Ernest." But the lady clung to him with wild and passionate entreaties.

"Oh, Walter—dear Walter," she pleaded, "do not drive us away from you. I cannot leave you—I will not."

"But, Ada, we can't all go; and you know that nothing but death parts me from our poor, helpless Edith. Ernest, my son, go. Show your mother that you can be firm, and obey me."

The boy looked for one brief moment with a shudder at the beloved form he was clinging to, then turned silently away, and was lowered into the boat.

"Now, Ada," said the gentleman, "I insist upon it, you must go." But the lady clung to him with the more determined grasp.

"If the lady will not come, we must leave her; every second counts, and life is dear to us all," said Melton.

"Oh, come, mother," cried the boy; "don't leave me to go alone. Do come! You don't know how nice it is."

"Ada," said the gentleman, sternly, as a flush of angry mortification for an instant chased the pallor from his broad, thoughtful brow—"Ada, have done with childish folly, this reckless trifling with life." And stooping down, he forcibly unclasped her hold from his garments, while the angry feeling faded from his heart; and pressing his lips to her pale, calm brow, he turned back to shield and comfort the frail, shrinking, delicate girl, who stood silent and motionless, looking out with a startled and terrified gaze upon the little tossing boat to which had been committed the keeping of those so very, very dear.

Walter Evelyn passed his arm caressingly round the fragile form of his child, and throwing the folds of his ample cloak around her, as he drew her to his bosom, shut out that fearful prospect from her view.

The little boat toiled on. Now lying almost motionless

on the foam, now darting forward, as the quick eye and skilful hand of Captain Hull directed her movements.

It was no boy's play, that tremendous struggle between the strong arm and conquering will of man, and the great power and unyielding force of those weltering waves.

"Back water, boys—starn all—there's a bull wave coming," shouted Hull. "Now take the ride of the wave, and starn her on with a will."

"It was done with set teeth and stern brows. The wave flowed back, and the boat grated on the sand.

Eager hands were put forth. Strong men rushed in shoulder deep to the work, and the panting and exhausted rowers resigning the oars to the care of fresh hands, sought rest and refreshment, amid troops of rejoicing and congratulating friends.

The women and children were tenderly lifted out of the boat, and carried up beyond the reach of wave and spray, under shelter of the banks, where kind and gentle hands ministered to their necessities, and soft, sweet voices spoke words of encouragement, consolation and hope. But how should *they* be comforted who had left loved ones behind! How should they exult in their own deliverance, when their hearts dearer halves were still aching with anxiety and grief beyond that fearful flood!

Ada Evelyn sunk on her knees on the sand, and stretching her arms toward the ship, as though she would thus reach her husband and child, swayed her slight figure at every fresh gathering wave, in stony and tearless agony. The fair boy stood by her side, shivering with fear and terror for those dear ones still on the wreck, and sobbing forth his entreaties that she would heed and answer the words of cheerful soothing addressed to her.

It was vain. She was absorbed in her own sorrow, and had no thought for the gentle little suffering heart that was bursting with grief beside her.

"See, mother," said the boy, "the boat has gone off again—they are going off with two boats, mother. Father and Edith will come this time."

The mother spoke not, but she turned her face toward him a moment, then passed her arm around him, and strained him with a convulsive clasp to her side.

"Look, Evelyn," said the captain on board the wrecked vessel, "look, there are two boats making for us this time, and it is perilous work, too. Thank God, since this must be, that we have struck among a glorious race. There is something grand in such desperate daring. Come, shall we get you out of this treacherous craft?"

"Take Edith first," said the gentleman addressed; but Edith could not be separated from her father. In speechless anguish she clung to him, turning shudderingly away from the arms extended to receive her.

"Take her, De Koven," said Evelyn; "you will guard her for me, I know."

"With my life, yes," answered De Koven.

"She will never be induced to leave me; I will go first, and she will come to me."

So saying, he placed the fainting and helpless girl in De Koven's arms, and with danger and difficulty was let down into the boat.

"Come now, Miss," urged Hull, "come, and I will engage to carry you to your mother with nothing more than a wetting. Come, sis, we will carry you safely."

Evelyn turned to the speaker, with an expression of deep suffering in his glance.

"I thank you, sir ; I thank you for your patient kindness, God knows how fervently ; but entreaties are unheeded here. My poor, unfortunate child, can neither speak nor hear—a mute from her birth."

Hull almost dropped his oar at this announcement, and a sickening, enervating feeling pressed upon his heart. He could laugh at the wind, and look defiance in the face of the wave. He could grapple with an enraged whale without blenching ; but his heart sunk and softened at the mute agony of that little pale face. So he looked another way, and forced back the tears.

"Will you come now, De Koven?" asked Evelyn, when Edith was safely deposited, motionless, in his embrace ; "will you come ? there is room for another."

"Why should I leave her?" said De Koven, mournfully, casting a sad look over the ruined structure on which he stood. "She has been to me a home, and household, and kindred and friends ; I have known no other. Why should I forsake her?"

"I think, notwithstanding, you will do well to come off now, said Hardy ; "the wind talks of backing round, and there will be a splash here before long, that few would be daring enough to put an oar into."

"I will stick to her a little longer : I think I will not abandon her yet. If I don't see you again, good-bye, Evelyn—good-bye, gentlemen—God reward and bless you."

"De Koven, this is madness," said Evelyn. "Will you not come?"

"Not yet," replied De Koven.

"As you will, then," said Hardy.

De Koven raised his hat. The rowers bent silently to their oars, and the boat darted away. Not one word was

uttered, as with steady stroke they labored and struggled, sometimes almost despairingly, to gain the shore. But the hand of the Lord was over them, and His ear had hearkened to the cry which in that trying hour had gone up from so many aching, but trustful and believing hearts.

There was rejoicing, and deep, devout outpourings of thankfulness, as hand clasped hand, and separated families and anxious friends sprang to each other's embrace.

Evelyn bore the helpless form of his fair child to the spot where her mother was kneeling, and placing her on a bed of blankets and shawls which kind hands had spread, bent anxiously over her. She was in a state of utter prostration, and to their affectionate ministration made no sign or response.

"She is utterly unconscious," exclaimed Evelyn, in a tone of alarm. "Can she be so exhausted? Is this faintness?"

He raised her hand. The little slender fingers lay powerless. There came no answering pressure to his clasp. Evelyn looked appealingly round—all were strangers—but sympathising faces and tearful eyes met his glance.

"Doctor, doctor, pray come here," said Mr. Alden, calling to the physician of the village, who was standing near.

Dr. Hesselten stepped over to the beautiful child, and took her little cold hand in his. He laid his fingers on the snowy wrist for a moment, then laid back the powerless limb, and with a deep, tremulous sigh, stepped silently back.

"She may rally," said he, in reply to the inquiring looks of those who surrounded him. "She may rally, but it is not probable—I should say scarcely possible."

"Oh Edith, Edith, my sweet, sinless child! It is cruel, too cruel to send this blight on thy young life, in expiation

of my sin," was the frenzied cry of Mrs. Evelyn, as the terrible truth flashed upon her.

"Ada—Ada—my poor, suffering wife, speak not such bitter and impatient words."

But Ada heeded him not, as she stood with clasped hands and fixed gaze bending over her child.

"See, see, Ada," said Evelyn, "be comforted—she moves—she revives."

Slowly the heavy lids were lifted from those dark, dreamy eyes; languidly their dying glance was turned to the loved faces bending over her. But oh, that bitter thought! There was no avenue by which, in that last brief awakening, her soul could hold communion with theirs.

The sweetest music in all the universe of God, the voice of kindred affection, had never gladdened her ear. The blessed words, "Father," or "Mother," or "God," had never found utterance from those mute lips. The silent signs of language her fingers were now powerless to make, and it was appalling to witness the terrible struggles on that sweet face, writhing in its speechless agony.

Suddenly, with one desperate effort, she rose to her feet, and pointing with her right hand upward, and motioning with a beckoning gesture for them to follow, she sunk upon the bosom of her father. It was over now. The long lashes fell over the sweet, fair cheek, and the mute child, so cherished, and guarded, and idolized, needed their care no more.

"Edith—Edith," said Ada, bending over the lifeless form of her child, and speaking, with deliberate and startling distinctness—"it is your mother who has done this. Thou, my beautiful, for my 'transgression.' The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul."

CHAPTER III.

MR. ALDEN kindly approached the heart-broken group, thus cast, in shipwreck and storm, with such a crushing weight of sorrow, strangers upon an unknown shore.

"He that keepeth thee will not sleep," he exclaimed, as he extended his hand to Evelyn, while Dr. Hesselten and the ladies gently led away the scarcely-conscious mother and sobbing boy, and with delicate ministrations composed and covered the lovely child thus suddenly stricken by the Angel of Death.

"This is, indeed, a sore and unlooked-for trial to us all," said Evelyn. "My poor wife was worn down with fright, fatigue, and exposure; and this last blow has well nigh maddened her. She needs rest and kindly care."

"She does, indeed," said Mr. Alden, to whom the agitated man addressed his remark—"she does, indeed; and, let me assure you, my dear sir, you are among a people who will gladly proffer it."

"Allow me to ask," rejoined Evelyn, "are you the rector of the church I see yonder across the fields?"

"I am the pastor of this little flock. I have spent ten contented happy years among them; and, let me tell you, I have found them a noble people—yes, a truly noble people."

No doubt Mr. Alden meant precisely what he said; for his

was a kindly and trustful nature; and he took it for granted that others were as liberal and lavish of their substance and their sympathies as he was himself.

"Mr. Alden," said Alice Hesselten, laying her hand on the reverend gentleman's arm, "it is time to get these people off the Beach. I wish to take them home with me. Will you extend an invitation to the gentleman for me?"

"Certainly, certainly—I shall be most happy to do it," and the good clergyman, who was never so happy as when he was conferring a favor or a civility upon another, turned again to Evelyn, and repeated the message entrusted to him. "Let me assure you," he added, in conclusion, "you could not have found pleasanter quarters; and I can speak from my own past experience, when I say, I know they will make you very comfortable."

"Of course," replied Evelyn, "I shall accept the hospitality so promptly tendered to me, for the sake of those dependent claimants on my care; but it will be painful to intrude so much, and such peculiar trouble, upon the quiet of a private family." And he glanced sadly at the covered form of his child.

"You may put that thought away," said Leena. "It will give us pleasure to minister to your personal and physical wants. Beyond that, you must look above."

"Well," said Mr. Alden, "I will look about among the wagons, and see if I can find a comfortable conveyance."

"There's Sam Grey," said Leena, looking towards a person who was standing a little apart, with folded arms, surveying the scenes enacting among the various groups gathered here and there on the shore.

"He has a commodious covered wagon. I will call him."

"Sam Grey hears," said the young man, advancing, "and is ready to do anything the ladies desire."

"Is your wagon here?"

"No; but I can soon have it here."

"Off with you, then, if you can, and get it."

"Yes, madam," said he, lifting his cap and bowing profoundly, with an air of mock reverence, while the laughter would look out at the windows of his great black eyes. He could not help it. There was enough of kindness hidden in his heart, but some quizzical nonsense always floated first to the surface. He mounted his horse and galloped quickly away.

"I think," said Alice, aside, to Leena, "while we wait for Sam, I will go and consult some of the ladies, as to means and measures for housing and feeding all these people."

"There's Mrs. Melton, and Mrs. Melville, and Mrs. Osgood, and, in fact, Mrs. and Miss everybody else; and there's Mrs. Hesselten talking with Mrs. Evelyn."

"Well, let Mrs. Hesselten alone, then, for she is where she is most needed. We will talk with the others."

So they wended their way through the crowds of curious idlers, till they reached a group of ladies, who were kindly chatting with some wet, weary, sad looking women, reclining listlessly on the sand.

"I am glad you've come," said Mrs. Melville. "I should like to know what's going to be done with all these poor forlorn objects?"

"Why, you must take a houseful yourself, and we must divide the pleasure among us."

"Pleasure, indeed!" said Mrs. Melville, bluntly, with a peal of laughter that rung along the shore. "Now, that's

just like you. Well, I am sure I am ready to do all I can ; but I shan't call it pleasure, for it will be anything else, I shall feel so sorry for the poor helpless things."

She expressed a kind feeling in unaffected words, but she was true as steel notwithstanding.

"Where is the lovely sick lady and the pretty little dumb girl?" asked a pale looking woman in a feeble voice, who had come off in the boat with the lady.

"The pretty little dumb girl is dead, and the lovely lady is mourning over her."

The poor woman sunk back with a sickened heart, and looked more wan and weary than before ; while the ladies who had gathered around came forward with eager interest to hear the details of so unexpected an event.

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Mrs. Melville, as the tale was ended.

"And where are they all now?" asked Mrs. Melton, who had been tenderly adjusting wrappers around the suffering woman on the sand.

"They are a short distance westward, near the lane," said Alice. "We are waiting for Sam Grey to come back with his wagon, and they are going home with us."

"What! corpse and all?" said Mrs. Melville.

"Of course," said Mrs. Melton. "How could it be otherwise?"

"Well! you will have a job," said Mrs. Melville.

"I know it," said Alice ; "but we may as well do it as anybody."

"Better—much better than any of us," said Mrs. Melton and Mrs. Osgood, speaking together.

"And I am very glad," said Mrs. Melton, in continuance, "that you can do it with so little inconvenience

—you have plenty of room, a small, quiet family, and no business to be interrupted. If you find you have undertaken more than your share of this sad business, we must all render you any assistance you need.”

“I hope you won’t get sick, but this is great exposure,” said Mrs. Osgood, with an uneasy glance at her slender neighbor.

“I don’t think I shall,” replied Alice, quietly; “but we had better go back, and have all ready when Sam comes. Are you going up soon?” said she, addressing the ladies generally.

“I am for one,” said Mrs. Melville; “but I am waiting to know how these folks are to be disposed of. This poor thing can’t walk, or I would take her home with me.”

“Our wagon is here somewhere,” said Mrs. Melton, “for I rode down on purpose to bring Melton and the boys something to eat—they have been here all day without anything.”

“Were you here when your husband went off in the first boat?” asked Alice.

“I am thankful I was not, for I should have tried to prevent his going; and if I had”—

“I should not have been here to thank and bless him,” interrupted the pale woman among the shawls, with a burst of tearful emotion.

“Oh! I don’t know about that,” said Mrs. Melton, pleasantly; “there was enough without him, for you see the boats are going back and forth all the time, and he is eating his dinner yonder very much at his ease.”

Mrs. Melton was right. For, as if in scorn of the predictions of the weather-wise watchers of its motions, the wind had concluded to “blow where it listed,” and having

hauled quite round to the northwest, had furled up its wings for the present.

When Alice and Leena returned to the place where they had left the Evelyns, they found little change in the position of the group. Mrs. Hesselten was still sitting with Mrs. Evelyn, who, with her head buried in the lap of her kind consoler, was moaning and sobbing like a wearied child.

Col. Hesselten was soothing and caressing the gentle little boy, who, worn out with weeping, had nestled himself into his lap, as if instinctively attracted to the kind heart against which he leaned; while Allen crept softly down beside them on the sand, and looked on with a sweet, sad, solemn face of interest and awe.

"I rather marvel," said Mr. Alden, addressing himself to Evelyn, who still stood with folded arms by his side—"I rather marvel that you should have taken such a route from Boston to New-York at this season, when there are so many facilities for traveling that distance more comfortably."

"Doubtless it does seem surprising that, with my delicate family, I should do so; but there are many reasons. In the first place we are strongly attached to De Koven. We owed our lives to him years ago, and I always take passage with him when I can. We never frequent public places, or travel by public conveyances when we can avoid it. My poor little timid, shrinking Edith, was wretched among strangers, and my wife was morbidly nervous and sensitive on her account."

He paused for an instant, and then, with a faltering voice, proceeded:

"Edith was familiar with De Koven, and loved him; for

he understood her nature and never wounded it. For that cause, more than any other, I sailed with him."

"Allen, where's your father?" asked Leena.

"He's busy yonder, by the bathing-house. One of the sailors is there, with his hand dreadfully crushed, and father has been home after instruments and necessities to dress it."

"Well, I am going to walk up; for Dury will require help and instructions about preparing to receive our guests, and I should like to have you go with me."

Allen arose cheerfully to comply, though, in truth, he would rather have remained where he was; for he was an enthusiast in his love of the sea, and of everything that spread sail on its surface; but he was a good, affectionate boy; so, though his heart was still busy with the stirring drama on the shore, he looked resolutely away, and followed his aunt.

"Got home at last, huh!—'gun ter think yer warnt niver comin," said Dury, who sat picking over beans, preparatory to baking; pork and beans being a prime dish with her, and one which, with the pertinacious determination of her race, she regularly presented at stated periods, whether agreeable to others or not. Comfortably ensconced within the wide, capacious jambs of the kitchen fire-place, in her favorite niche under the oven, Dury was always happy, especially with cooking in prospect; so she looked up as Leena entered, with a contented grunt, remarking, "gon' ter bake to-morrow."

"I am glad of it," said Leena, "for we shall need something nice, and if anybody can produce it, I am sure our Dury can; but you will have to put aside your beans for the present, for I want you all over the house."

"Can't, no how," said Dury.

"Oh, but you must now, Dury, and you will, I know; come, Dury, do, and I will help you with your beans before bed-time. We shall have a distressed family here from the wreck, before we are half ready for them."

Dury continued to pour her beans from one hand into the other, blowing out the chaff as they fell, with grave equanimity, carrying out her own purpose.

"Oh, Dury! do stop and help me. I want a fire in the great chamber immediately, and good, blazing fires in both rooms, and I want bedding aired, and tea got ready, and—oh, dear me! I want everything done, and all done first; and what shall I do if you won't stir?"

"Done now," said Dury, rising composedly and shaking her apron. "Wha' shill I do fust?"

"Get up the fires first, Dury; the lady will probably wish to go to bed at once. No, stop—first put a cot in the front room, and spread a nice sheet on it."

"Want bed, I spuz?"

"No, Dury, no bed will be required." Dury stared.

"The little girl is dead that is to be lain on it, Dury."

Dury dropped her basket of chips, which she had filled, preparatory to obeying the order first given.

"Ain't gon' ter bring dead corpse here?"

"Why not, Dury? what else can they do? You would not like to leave one of your children lying on the Beach?"

"Guh! have left 'em many a dark night on Naapeag Beach, and in Hether woods," said Dury, honestly.

"You have, Dury!—but they were not dead?"

"No, but I was—dead-drunk," speaking as if in a spirit of expiatory self-condemnation.

"Oh, Dury! how could you do such a thing? I wonder they did not perish."

"Would, eff Lord hadn't took better care on 'em than old squaw," said Dury, as she mounted the back stairs with fuel for the lodging-room fire.

"I'm drefle sorry, Miss Leena, they're comin' here with that garl corpse," said Dury, with that aversion to coming in contact with the dead which was one of the characteristic peculiarities of her tribe.

"It's bad sign to bring dead body under ruff."

"It is a bad sign, Dury, to carry one out from under our roof," said Leena, turning the blankets she had hung by the fire.

"Wha's sign, Miss Leena? I niver knowd as was any," inquired Dury, bringing out volumes of smoke, as, squatted on her heels on the hearth, she coaxed the reluctant blaze with the front breadth of her petticoat.

"It is a sign, Dury, and I know it to be a true one, that there are aching hearts left behind."

"Oh! yes-'m. Well, spuz it is."

"Now, Dury, the fires are all in good order, and the lodgings prepared, just run in and tell Milly I wish she would come here as soon as she can."

Dury started, but put her head back before closing the door to say, "I'll go stay 'long a' Sophy to-night."

Poor Dury! she was one of the tidiest of her proverbially tidy race, being cleanliness almost to a fault, honest as truth, faithful, industrious, economical, skilful in kitchen-craft—she was a treasure to her employers, but for one disqualifying propensity; she had sold herself, body and soul, to the demon that lurked in tin kettles, and walked stealthily, even in sweet Sea-spray, in junk bottles and jugs—the

destroying angel which had smitten, and well nigh exterminated, the once numerous and powerful tribe of Montauk.

"I come as soon as I could," said Milly, who glided softly in as Leena was busy completing her arrangements; "but the girls have gone to spend a week with Mrs. Davy, and I had so many little things at home to attend to. Can I help you in anything now?"

"Not just yet. I am so sorry the girls have gone, for I never feel as if anything was done up quite right that they have not helped in. There will be preparations to be made for the burial of that dear little child. They will be here soon; and I judge from what I saw of the mother, that she is wholly incapacitated for giving any directions. If you will take that care off our hands, it will relieve us very much. You will be ready to attend to it as soon as they arrive?"

"They are here now," replied Milly, as the sad party entered the passage.

Pale as marble, but tearless and silent, the bereaved and heart-sick mother was borne fainting and exhausted into the apartment, and sinking helplessly into a seat, she suffered the wrappers to be removed, and her disordered dress to be adjusted, without notice or comment, her thoughts apparently entirely abstracted from the persons and objects around her.

"Ada, my poor Ada!" said Evelyn, bending over her; "has this blow utterly crushed you?"

No word came from those pale, parched lips.

"Speak to her, Ernest, my son," said Evelyn, turning away with a look of anguish.

"Mother—dear mother," said the boy, pressing his arm

fondly around her neck, and laying his cheek, streaming with tears, to hers. "Mother, you have father and me left."

"Oh, how can I live? Surely, surely the hand of the Lord is too heavy upon me. In terrible judgment for my sins hath he smitten me," exclaimed Ada, as she lifted her clasped hands, and rose from her seat in trembling excitement.

"For my sake, Ada—for Ernest's sake, you must quiet this excessive emotion. Be calm, Ada, and remember that you do not suffer alone. Can you not, for the sake of those equally afflicted, subdue this passionate sorrow?"

"I will try, Walter—for the love of those left to me, I will try. But this is a fearful judgment."

"It is a painful affliction, dear Ada, but we must bear it submissively. The hand that bruises can bind, and while it chastises can also console. Can you not feel that there is much of mercy mingled with this bitter cup?"

"You may feel so, Walter, for you are pure and good. But for me—oh! for me—there is nothing but dread and fear of God's retribution," and Ada sank back in her seat, and buried her face in her hands.

"Come, mother," said Ernest, who was early learning the lesson of self-control, and was resolutely choking down his own sorrow, that he might minister to that of another—"come mother, the tea-bell has rung, and you need something, I am sure, for you have had nothing all day. Come, mother, do, you will feel better then."

"I don't wish to eat—I shall never eat again," said Ada, with an air of calm decision which had suddenly taken the place of the passionate grief she had been indulging.

"Ada! Mrs. Evelyn," said Evelyn, gravely, "don't be

perverse in your sorrow, but command yourself and come to your tea. You must take some refreshment, or you will sink under so much excitement. Don't add to the distress of this sorrowful hour, anxiety and care for you."

Ada rose, and calmly followed her husband to the tea-table. It seemed that a grave nod, or a look from that calm, serious eye, had a strange power over her, for her eye turned uneasily, as if in avoidance of the earnest, anxious watchfulness of his.

Little indeed of Dury's good cheer was disturbed, for it was a silent and hurried meal, scarcely tasted by any of the little circle that sat down to it. Alice and Leena were disturbed and thoughtful. They wished to get the nervous and excitable mother quietly bestowed in the apartment designed for her, before the trying and painful scene so soon to be enacted.

"Mrs. Evelyn's room is in readiness," said Alice, with a meaning glance towards Evelyn; "and perhaps you would do well to take her to it now."

Evelyn understood the motive, and, acting upon the suggestion, took Ada's unresisting arm in his, and led her away.

"Now you must betake yourselves, Ada and Ernest, both of you, to bed. I cannot afford to have any evil come nigh you, my cherished ones. My life, and all that I look to in the future to heighten it, now centres in you."

So saying, Evelyn drew the frail forms to his bosom, and they sobbed out their sorrows together.

Ernest soon laid his sweet cherub head on his pillow, and, worn out with the exhausting emotions of the past terrible day, dropped calmly to sleep.

"Indulge me, Walter—indulge me in this. I will be

calm, and content myself. The first frenzy of grief is over. I will speak no more wild, wicked words. Let me sit quietly here till—till”—her voice was broken, and she paused—“till that terrible trial is over, and our child is brought home to us. I must look on her. I must, dear Walter, and then I will obey you, and sleep, if I can.”

Gently and noiselessly the beautiful remains of the fair child were brought in, and laid on the spotless couch spread to receive them.

Kind hearts and strong hands had done the sad service. Gentle faces bent tearfully over the cold form, and soft voices spoke words of admiring and pitying comment. The considerate, generous-hearted men who had borne her in, stood for a moment sadly gazing on the innocent face of the unconscious young stranger with bowed heads—then turned, and walked silently away, to rougher encounters, and noisier and worldlier scenes.

CHAPTER IV.

DAYLIGHT was fading, and the shadows of cloudy twilight were gathering gloomily over the waters. All who wished to do so had left the ship; to escape with life had been the only consideration, and no one had looked to luggage, or any individual property interests.

The boats were hauled up, and all not detained by business interests were seeking their homes. With the exception of two or three long-trying and devoted followers of his fortunes, the young master was alone on the rolling wreck. De Koven stood for some time, after he had watched the last returning boats to their destination, looking out with a dreamy gaze upon the waters, and musing sadly and silently holding solemn communion with his own thoughts, and pondering many bitter themes. With his arms folded tightly across his chest, as if he would hold down and conquer the chafing lion within, he leaned his back against the spindle of the capstan, with his storm-cap drawn down over his brows, motionless, and sternly looking in upon himself.

"Clarence De Koven," spoke a deep, determined voice at his elbow—"Clarence De Koven, what are you up to now?"

De Koven turned, with flashing eyes, upon the daring disturber of his thoughts.

"You needn't look daggers at me," said the man, calmly confronting him; "you know very well I don't fear you"—De Koven took a step forward, with a glance of fury—"half as much as I love you," pursued the speaker, taking no notice whatever of the passionate gesture of his superior; "so I ask you again, what are you up to now?"

"What am I up to? Nothing, but standing patiently here, waiting for the waves to swallow me. Why should you trouble yourself about that?" said De Koven, sharply.

"Very well, then, so be it; I don't object, if you say so. But, Clarence De Koven, how will you answer it to yourself—for I know you will be your own sternest judge—how will you answer it to yourself, I ask, if you do stand idly here, and make no effort to save, for its rightful owners, what is no longer yours? How are you to answer it to those poor fellows on the Beach, who have trusted their little property to your keeping, if you do let it perish, while you pout like a sulky school-boy?"

De Koven spoke not a word in reply, but taking up the trumpet which he had thrown carelessly on the deck, sent over the breakers the brief order—"Send off the boats."

"Now, Lundy, summon the men."

"That's easily done," said Lundy; and they soon stood looking kindly and affectionately into the face of their fiery young Captain. De Koven took out his pocket-book, and handed it to Lundy.

"There's money enough, and more than enough, to pay all the men; divide it among them. Go ashore, my fine fellows, and never mind me."

The men looked at each other in stupid amazement.

"You see, the boats are coming off, and you are of no use here—be off, and God bless you! Go."

The men drew back for Lundy to be spokesman.

"And leave you here? So you expect us to do it, I suppose? I have not followed your fortunes from the hour you were born, to tuck about now, like a whipped cur, at your bidding. Did not I take you, a little limsy rag, from your mother's arms? Did not I promise her, while you lay looking up in my face with your great, saucy, wondering eyes, that I would love you, and follow you, and serve you as long as you needed my care? Clarence De Koven, the day has not come yet that you can do without it. And you think to buy me off with money, do you? See here!" and he gave the pocket-book a toss which sent it far off into the sea.

The boats had by this time reached the ship. They were manned now by a set of men having the appearance of paid operatives, with the exception of Hardy, who appeared now to have come off in his official capacity, and was sitting at his ease in the stern.

"Will you take off these men?" asked De Koven, looking down upon them over the bows.

"Of course," replied Hardy; "but I wish to speak to you, if you please, a moment."

"Bear a hand here, my boys, and help the gentleman on board," said De Koven, advancing, as Hardy struggled to gain a footing on the wet and slippery deck. "I am sorry, sir, that I cannot offer you better cheer; it is not my wont to do the honors of my poor craft so coldly; but necessity, you know, sir, knows no law, and I can extend neither courtesy nor kindness."

"I did not come off here, at this time of day, to bandy compliments," said Hardy, resolutely, nettled at the sneer which he fancied lurked under De Koven's bland speech.

"I ask your pardon," said De Koven, frankly extending his hand. "I am a wrecked and ruined man, just at this moment particularly out of humor with myself. Bear with me if I am a little savage. You are the wreck-master."

"I am," replied Hardy; "but you are under no obligation to employ me. You can act for yourself, if you choose; but I thought it proper to ask your intentions, for I have business enough of my own to attend to, and I have no notion of loitering away time here, or meddling with a business that don't concern me, unless you wish it."

"Can't you act officially, without my sanction?" asked De Koven.

"That depends upon circumstances," replied Hardy. "In certain contingencies, if you won't act, I must. To come to the point at once, who owns this ship and cargo?"

"I own her myself, every inch, from truck to keelson, except the personal luggage of the passengers and the traps of the hands. I have not a relative or dependent in the world to be the poorer for her loss. I was born on the sea, and cradled under sails. A ship has been the nurse of my childhood, the playfellow and companion of my boyhood; and this ship," said he, bringing down his foot passionately upon the wet plank beneath it—"this ship, the wife, children, and friends of my manhood. I love her, sir, as other men love the human objects on which they place their affections; and, because I have nothing else on earth to love or to live for, I only wished to go down in death with her, and bury my bones with hers in the sand."

"Then you are not insured?" inquired Hardy.

"And if I am," replied De Koven, "would it console you for the loss of your wife, that you had been so provident as to get her life insured?"

"As I never have owned one of those pretty appendages, I cannot tell; but if you are not insured, I have no further business here. I have no authority to compel a man to save his own property, if he chooses to throw it away."

"But I am insured—fully insured. What then?"

"Then it is one of those contingencies in which, I believe, I am obliged, by my oath of office, to act, if you won't. I may be mistaken—but I shall take legal advice, and you will hear from me again."

"By Heavens!" exclaimed De Koven, laying his hand on Hardy's shoulder to detain him; "you have given me something to live for. How could I be such a blind, stupid fool as to forget that, as soon as her keel grated here, every nail in her planks, and every thread in her canvas, belonged to others? How could I be such a consummate ass, calling myself a man of business, and feeling myself a man of honor? Lundy, you are right, the time has not come yet when I am fit to take care of myself. Throw in that valise and the little case containing the ship's papers, which I see you have cared for, Lundy, and I will go ashore with the gentleman."

The seamen had soon thrown in the choice articles, selected hurriedly when danger threatened. The two gentlemen took their seats in one of the boats, and continued their conversation as the oarsmen pulled for the shore.

"Where are you from?" asked Hardy, wishing for information from head-quarters, which he had gained already from some of the seamen who had improved the earliest opportunity for effecting a landing.

De Koven smiled, as he answered explicitly and technically: "The good ship Orphan, 1200 tons burthen, from Liverpool via Boston; bound to New-York, with a full

cargo of dry goods, choice liquors, &c.; Clarence De Koven, sole owner, agent and master."

"Dutiable articles, it seems, and valuable," said Hardy.

"Are you Maine Law folks here?" asked De Koven, all his buoyancy of heart having come back with the new impetus, which the necessity for action had engendered.

"Not exactly," said Hardy, with a meaning glance at some of the oarsmen. "If we knock in the heads of some of your fancy brands, it will not be to moisten the clay we plant corn in."

"Do you think it will be practicable to get my unwieldy spouse on her feet again? She is well built, and in perfect repair. If she does not thump too hard on that sandy bed, when her cargo is out, might she not float again?" asked De Koven, anxiously, for his heart still clung to his deserted home, left alone in the dash of the sea.

"I have got off vessels," replied Hardy, "but they were lighter craft than yours. If the weather is favorable, and we get her cargo out successfully, it might be done, possibly—hardly, though. However, you can have Avery down here with his forces, and try it, if you choose."

"I would give all I possess on earth," said De Koven, earnestly, "if I could be once more afloat on the broad sea, with those old timbers under me. I could begin the world over again with a stout heart, and trust to my own energies to redeem my fortunes."

"With God's blessing on your efforts, I suppose you mean," said Hardy, pleasantly.

"Oh, ah—yes, that, of course," replied De Koven, with a careless, abstracted air.

"I think the weather works fair for a fine day tomorrow," said Hardy, as they stepped out of the boat.

"Well," said De Koven, I shall put all further responsibility upon you, Captain Hardy. Situated as I am, I should dislike to meddle much in the business; but I feel responsible for the safety of my passengers and their effects. Where are they all stowed?"

"I have made arrangements for that, as far as I could. The women and children are scattered among the families in the village; and the men are waiting till some order could be taken about getting off their effects."

"Since you say so, I shall set my men to work at once, and bring off her lading as fast as we can. In the meantime, Captain De Koven, you will, if you please, come up home with me and get some refreshment. We can't begin our operations just yet."

So saying, Captain Hardy gave some brief directions to his assistants, and saying he should return in an hour or two to the active discharge of his onerous duties, he took De Koven by the arm; they passed over the banks, and, crossing the bridge thrown over the long, crooked, and deep pond which flowed between the Beach and the street, wended their way, in earnest discourse, to the village.

"So, Lundy, you out-walked us," remarked De Koven, to his faithful and free-spoken friend, who was awaiting his arrival at the residence of Captain Hardy.

"I out-traveled you, at any rate," replied Lundy; "for I jumped into one of those long-sided rattle-traps, called a farm-wagen, with a pair of horses like flying dragons; and I know not when my bones will get snugly back into their sockets. They have had an unceremonious shaking, any how. But, Captain, you look tired. Here, take this seat. Once well settled in this, you will forget there is such a thing as fatigue."

So saying, he wheeled round a commodious armed chair, luxuriously cushioned, and swinging most invitingly back on its long, curving rockers. De Koven dropped languidly into the proffered seat, and, throwing himself back with a listless, melancholy expression on his fine features, watched the embers, as they glowed, and faded, and fell, tracing grotesque features, and strange fantastic figures, and musing over the shifting and shadowy pursuits and purposes of life, its bright, fresh hopes, its sweet, early dreams, its fervid aspirations, its soaring ambition, sparkling, and flashing, and fading, and falling, to be extinguished in dust and ashes at last.

"Come, Captain De Koven," said Lundy, who had been watching him with a look of anxious and fatherly interest—"come, here is something more substantial than meditation to feed upon. Just wheel round your chair."

✓ Captain Hardy, like De Koven, was a bachelor, and unencumbered with family cares; but his establishment was presided over with taste and skill, and the table in that bright, cheerful little parlor, at which they now took their seats, was set out with dainties and substantial edibles, comforts which the most fastidious epicure would have looked upon to covet. But eating, like every other sub-lunary joy, must come to an end; so they shoved back their chairs, and began to take thought for the morrow.

"First," said De Koven, "I must look about among my passengers, and inquire a little as to their comforts; and then, if you please, we will return to the Beach, and see about getting out their luggage. I suppose they would like to take the rails to-morrow, if that is practicable, for New-York."

"Is New-York their ultimate destination, or are they

bound for the Far West?" asked Hardy, without any particular interest in the answer to a question he had asked for the sake of saying something; for his thoughts were wandering, where he felt he ought himself to follow, to the Beach.

"I don't exactly know," replied De Koven, as they stepped out into the street. "They form part of the establishment of a personal friend of mine, who is about to locate on a large tract of land, I believe, in this State. This is New-York, is it not? Well, the farm and house-servants who have been reared on his estate at home, prefer following his fortunes in a new home to taking service under a new master in the old one. Servants are servants in England, Captain Hardy. In this land of perfect equality, such relations are not recognized; or, if they are, it is on the principle of making the servant greater than his lord."

"We have 'helps,'" said Hardy, dryly, "who generally help themselves to the lightest labor, the earliest leisure, and the best fare."

De Koven found his fellow-voyagers rested and refreshed in the hospitable homes to which they had been admitted; and as they turned from that duty once more into the street, he remarked: "I should like to look in upon Evelyn, one minute, if we have time; and then I will detain you no longer."

"Do you think he will bury his child here?" asked Hardy, by way of breaking to De Koven intelligence which he knew would pain him.

"Bury his child here! In God's name, what do you mean?" inquired De Koven, hurriedly.

"I mean that the little girl died as soon as she was landed. I purposely withheld the fact from you, at Lundy's suggestion, until you had dined; and, but for your propo-

sal to call on him, we intended you should sleep over your troubles before you added to them. You will excuse me. I presumed that Lundy could judge in the matter better than I."

De Koven seemed in no haste to speak, so they walked on in silence.

"Dead!" said he, at length; "dead! Edith Evelyn dead. So pure, so beautiful, so tenderly cherished. Why are these things so?"

"In mercy and kindness, doubtless," replied Hardy; "you believe so, of course."

"I dare say I should be a better man if I did," replied De Koven; but, to be honest with you, I can't see it so at all."

"Perhaps it is not necessary that you should. Perhaps in this particular instance you never may, but it is none the less so; and you may live to acknowledge that even in this instance there was wisdom and mercy."

"And justice, too?" asked De Koven, with something very like a sneer.

"And justice, too!" replied Hardy.

De Koven said no more. His was evidently an unchastened spirit, a high, noble nature, to be loved and admired, and wept over and prayed for.

"Come on, Hardy, I can't see Evelyn to-night, it would utterly unman me. His un murmuring and confiding trust, his perfect and unquestioning submission to what I know he would devoutly believe to be the chastening of the Divine hand, would be such a rebuke to my high strung rebellion. No, I can't go near him to-night." He quickened his pace as he spoke. "Evelyn will need his trunks and his packing cases. I should have thought of that sooner—

but this provoking business of stranding my ship, is one I have never been caught in before, and it has completely thrown me off my balance. I must try to collect my bewildered faculties."

A few minutes' brisk walking brought them on to the Beach. Fires had been kindled, round which were reclining, in all imaginable attitudes, groups of laborers, waiting orders from the wreck-master—the ruddy blaze of their watch-fires gleaming and flashing upon their figures and faces, and lighting up a scene not without interest in its picturesque and solitary wildness. Soon all was bustle and activity; the fires were deserted, except by boys and lookers-on, not efficient in rough surf service, to whom was entrusted the charge of keeping them up, for the occasional cheering of the men whose arduous duties exposed them to wet and cold. The boats were again in requisition, and the business, commencing with the lighter articles of baggage and private personal property, was soon fairly progressing—De Koven on board, superintending, with Lundy's aid, the debarking of the articles, and Hardy on the shore, with competent and trusty deputies, receiving and taking note of them. So they worked without cessation all night, and the morning found the Beach strewn with boxes, and barrels, and bales, and shrouds, and sails, and spars, and alive with a motley assemblage of laughing, jesting, scowling, scolding, wet and weary specimens of masculine humanity.

CHAPTER V.

“YES,” said Evelyn, in reply to some questions kindly put by Colonel Hesselten, with regard to his wishes as to the arrangements indispensable under the circumstances in which he was so unexpectedly and painfully involved—“yes, I shall bury my child here. It seems a pleasant and secluded place; just such a one as her shrinking love of retirement would have chosen. Neither Mrs. Evelyn nor myself have any preference. Her friends and mine all sleep in other lands. We have lived in no place long enough for Edith to have formed any attachment to its localities; and here, where she was directed by the hand of her Heavenly Father to breathe out her life—here, it is my wish that she should sleep the long slumber of death. I shall leave all arrangements in the hands of the ladies. I have no knowledge of customs or proprieties on such occasions. They will, if they please, act as they act for each other.”

Under the skilful and delicate supervision of Milly, the simple preparations for the grave were soon neatly and tastefully made by the kind hands of the fair girls of the village, and the hapless girl, little younger than themselves, so strangely cast upon their care, lay in her cold, unsullied

loveliness, sweetly smiling, in the snowy drapery in which they had shrouded her.

The fair young workers stood back, for the father and the wan, wild-looking mother, would look on their child. Ada bent over the fair form, but no wail broke from her lips. She had struggled and striven to keep down her agony. Long and lovingly did they gaze on the cold, calm brow, and sunny and shining tresses which clustered over it. Ada raised a silken curl, and looked wistfully around.

"It has been done," said a soft, trembling voice near her. The look was understood, and the coveted treasure was silently laid in her hand.

A burst of uncontrollable grief shook the frame of the agonized mother; but she suppressed her groans, and turned in wordless misery away.

" 'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord,' " spoke the deep, musical voice of Mr. Alden, as Evelyn and Ada turned from the couch beside which they had been standing. Evelyn extended his hand silently, to meet the cordial grasp of the clergyman.

"I trust," said the reverend gentleman, "you can say, 'blessed be the name of the Lord,' even while He is thus afflicting you?"

" 'Though He slay me, still will I trust in Him. Clouds and darkness are round about Him; but righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His throne,' " responded Evelyn. "Yes, I can say, 'God is my hope and strength, a very present help in time of trouble.' "

"I am truly rejoiced to find you so well supported and comforted," remarked Mr. Alden. "It is right and natural to mourn the sundering of the strong ties that bind us so

delightfully to this life; but I am certain, the first sharp edge of this keen sorrow a little blunted, you will prove that it is also sweet to feel how strong is that added attraction which is winning your thoughts to another. It is a beautiful idea, which I have seen somewhere expressed: 'They only have always a child, who have one in Heaven.' You will feel this, I am certain you will, in all its healing and spiritualizing blessedness. I trust you will rest and be strengthened. I will look in on the morrow, and I do earnestly hope I shall find you refreshed and comfortable."

"I thank you, dear sir, for your cordial sympathy. I trust the Lord will send support and consolation. 'He healeth those that are broken in heart, and giveth medicine to heal their sickness.' We cannot be wholly desolate with such promises from on high, and such sustaining and sympathizing kindness around us."

The good pastor took his leave; and, after a brief pause over the motionless form of her who last night gladdened them with her mute good-night caress, Evelyn and Ada sought the retirement of their own room, and mingled the tears they sought not to repress, over the pillow of their sleeping boy.

"Did not you think it was strange they did not ask Mr. Alden to make a prayer?" asked one of the young ladies, who had volunteered to watch by the lifeless child through the night, turning to her friend, who was the chosen companion of her vigils.

"I heard the gentleman ask for a prayer-book," replied the person appealed to. "Hark! he is reading now in his room above."

"Yes. They are the sort, then, that read prayers, and carry their religion about in their pockets. Well, they

have no need of any gift that way, if their work is all done, ready for them; but it don't seem as if there could be much spirit in such cut and dried prayers."

"I suppose it is more like work," replied the companion. "I've always heard Church of England folks depended upon works, and did not believe in conversions or any change of heart. It is their way, and, I dare say, they think it is the right way; but I should not feel as if it was praying to read printed prayers out of books."

The young gentleman who was to share with them the duty of watching, now came in, and the subject of printed prayers and gilt-edge book religion was discontinued.

One by one, those who had come in to render such assistance as might be needed, retired to their homes. Evelyn's packing-cases had been forwarded from the Beach by De-Koven. Dury had gone to stay away from the roof that sheltered the dead, and the Colonel had smoked his pipe on her seat under the oven.

Leena and Alice, having made due arrangements for the comfort and midnight meal of the "watchers," had retired to their own room. Allen had stretched his weary limbs in sleep, and silence settled over the household.

Leena and Alice drew closely to the decaying embers in their private apartment, to collect their thoughts and rest awhile before they retired.

"What strange, unthought-of events! How much of excitement has been crowded into the little space of time since we sat here last night, said Alice," sinking uneasily into her lounging-chair, which spread its broad shelter to receive her.

"I am ashamed of myself," said Leena, in reply, "when I consider how little I have felt. I have been so excited

and so hurriedly occupied, that I have had no time to think or to feel; and I have gone through with it all, and seen death brought in at our doors as I should have looked on any other confusion incident to business; and now I can go to bed and sleep, knowing that our roof shelters souls so stricken and steeped in sorrow. It seems so heartlessly selfish that I am sick of myself."

"We are not called on to feel deeply all the sorrows which duty and kindness prompt us to cheer and alleviate," replied Alice. "This would be a miserable state of trial, indeed, if we felt always for others as we feel for ourselves. We should be disqualified for relieving or assisting, and the world would be one disordered scene of gloom and depression. As for these strangers, we shall do, cheerfully and kindly, all we can to console them. We can't feel their bereavement as if it were our own."

"Well, as Mrs. Melville said, we have undertaken a job. I don't know how we shall get along with it," said Leena, with a troubled, disconsolate look.

"The Lord has put this work into our hands, and he will vouchsafe strength adequate to its requirements. We shall get through with it well enough, I have not the least doubt that we shall," replied Alice, cheerfully.

So they, too, retired, and sleep soon weighed down their eyelids.

The morrow found Earnest and Ada both unable to rise, weak, unnerved, and feverish. Evelyn watched over them with tearful and untiring tenderness. Sympathy and attentive kindness, from within and without, surrounded them; and the shrouded girl lay waiting the coffin and the grave.

A soft, smiling day enabled Hardy and De Koven to drive on their unlading operations without interruption; and

with an accession of laborers from the little villages and hamlets about Sea-spray, to facilitate and expedite the work, the ship was speedily dismantled. The crew, with the exception of Lundy, took passage on the cars for New-York, and the passengers followed their example.

De Koven had nerved his heart for the dreaded interview with his friends. He had bent his lofty brow in grief, over the shrouded form of the innocent and helpless child, who had been, from her infant years, his favourite playfellow and pet, greeting him, in her sweet language of gestures and signs, with the warmest demonstrations of attachment, and clinging to him in the exuberance of her child-like, unsyllabled joy.

"Evelyn," said he, wringing, in deep emotion, the hand silently extended to him—"Evelyn, I have no words to comfort you. You know, surely you do know, that all my heart knows of love, is for you and yours. I can mourn with you over our sweet Edith, but I cannot say aught to soften this blow."

"There is comfort and soothing, dear De Koven, in sympathy like this; but there would be deep and abiding joy in my heart, could I teach you in this solemn hour, when the shadow of death is lying heavily on our hearts, to look for consolation and peace, where, only, I hope ever to find it. Think of it, De Koven, for her sake, whose young feet has been called to tread the dark valley, if you would share with me the hope of a blessed reunion above."

De Koven made no reply. He honored, he revered his friend, but he could not comprehend the deep, sustaining, cheering influences, which lived and spoke in his unfaltering religious faith. After a brief agitating interview with Ada and Ernest, De Koven accompanied his friend to

the grave-yard, where, after a melancholy ramble, they separated, De Koven pursuing his way to the Beach, and Evelyn returning to his new found home.

"Ada," said he, gently, as he stooped caressingly over her, "I have been to the grave-yard—" he paused, for he expected a burst of wild weeping would follow this remark; but Ada looked composedly up in his face, and he proceeded—"I have selected a pleasant spot on that sunny hill-side, where our lost lamb will sleep safely her long sleep. I have found her a place by the side of those who were strangers, like herself: the lovely young mother, in her fresh bridal robes, and her new born babe, scarcely lent for a day. The sunlight will shine on her all the day long, and the summer birds will sing in the green branches above her. There is nothing gloomy to me in the aspect of the spot where we are led by our Maker to lay her. You will bear it submissively, will you not, dear Ada?"

Ada bent her head in silence, and Evelyn went on.

"It would be my choice, were any choice left me, to have the service of our own church, on this first affliction in our little domestic world. It has been breathed over the silent dust of all who were dear to us. The blessed and consoling promises, the high and holy hopes of resurrection and reunion, which it offers and inspires, are inexpressibly dear to me; and I know that to you, Ada, even more than to me, for the hallowed associations that cling to it, it would be particularly gratifying to have it now. I have had some conversation with Mr. Alden, the very kind and sympathizing clergyman of this parish. He tells me there is a pretty little church in the village of Gosport, some seven miles distant, and he will send a messenger to ask the services of the rector, if we desire it. Mr. Alden

is all kindness and true gentlemanly courtesy. Shall we accept his offer, Ada, or shall we bury our child according to the usages of the parish and people among whom we place her ?”

Ada started, as if from a dream. The closing remarks of her husband had fallen on an unheeding ear ; her thoughts had been far away, with another people, and in another land. She listened, with a shuddering sigh, as he repeated what he had been saying, and replied, with an indifference which pained and surprised him—

“As you please, Walter—I have little choice ;” then lapsed again into silence, while Evelyn paced the apartment, wounded, and wondering at her mood.

After a short time spent in silent self-communing, Evelyn drew his chair to the bed-side of Ernest, and, laying his head on the pillow, beside the soft locks of the gentle child, talked softly and soothingly, and of peaceful and pleasant things, meeting looks and tones of grateful and affectionate interest from the loving and pure-hearted boy.

Evelyn felt unaccountably repelled by the demeanor of Ada. He could not understand the cold indifference with which she had shut her heart against his, and withheld her sympathy in this trying hour. He could not acknowledge to his thoughts that Ada was selfish. The thought, so painful, nevertheless had often presented itself, but he put it shrinkingly away. He would not willingly give it harbor ; but it rose stronger now—now, when its presence was most gallingly unwelcome.

It was true, if he would not see it. Ada was purely selfish ; unconsciously, but unmistakably devoted to self. Beautiful, very beautiful, she unquestionably was ; gentle, loving, sweet-tempered, yet making herself weapons of her

weakness, she was capricious, self-willed and exacting in her soft and smiling helplessness.

Vain, in the depths of her heart, of the power of her fairy and fragile loveliness; vain, too, of the deep, elevated love of the noble heart that loveliness had won, she cast herself with selfish inefficiency upon his care. Yet she loved, with all the warmth of her nature, her husband and her children—seeking no enjoyment, loving no pursuits, cherishing no affections, and knowing no pleasures of which they were not the objects and sharers. Still, there was something shut up in her heart, which Evelyn could not solve; and, scarcely knowing what he fancied or feared, he felt—disguise from himself with whatever self-deluding skill he might—he felt sometimes a sickening conviction, that, in the secret recesses of her heart, there was hidden that he might not reach and read.

Another day had passed. Another night had closed in, with its silence and shadows, and still the shrouded girl lay waiting the coffin and the grave. Another night the gentle-hearted young maidens of Sea-spray kept their vigils over her, and another morning walked blushing over the sea. The day glided on. The last arrangements, so appalling in their details to the quivering hearts of those who mourn, were completed. The coffin had opened its bosom for its silent occupant, and the last dreaded hour drew nigh. Alone in their anguish, the parents had looked for the last time on their first blighted bud, and the brother had shed his last scalding tears on the brow of his childhood's mate. The lid was screwed down, shutting out the blessed sunshine from that sweet, pale face, forever! The soft tones of the little church bell tolled out on the calm, clear air. Oh, the bruised, and bleeding, and broken hearts that have

shivered and swelled in their suffocating sorrow, at the sound of that dear old bell, since first its silvery voice called its hearers to worship or to weep! Oh, the unmitigated anguish, the amount of sorrow and misery, beyond all summing up, that during those long two centuries has been endured and forgotten, within hearing of its solemn tongue!

So the little procession moved on; for, in simple, sweet Sea-spray, it was still the custom for all "sorts and conditions of men," from childhood to age, to follow the remains of the departed to the narrow home on the hill.

"I am the resurrection and the life, saith the Lord; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die," rose on the still, wintry air, as the sweet, clear, ringing voice of the young rector proceeded with the burial service, in all its impressive and solemn grandeur.

The last rite was over; the last service the living can render to the dead, was finished. The coffin was hidden forever from the streaming eyes that followed it, and Edith Evelyn slept in her little grave, by the shore of the sounding sea!

CHAPTER VI.

CALM, bright sunny days succeeded each other, and the bustling, energetic wreck-master drove on his men with untiring and vigilant zeal, plunging at once into the thickest of the business ; and, lavishly expending his own strength wherever a vigorous effort or a bold struggle was most needed, he accomplished an inconceivable amount of work in an incredibly short space of time.

With a jest here, and a jerk there, a kick in one place, and a cuff in another, he kept his laborers all brisk and lively, sometimes laughing at his sallies of humor, and sometimes dodging from his impending wrath. It was amusement for De Koven, in his lighter moods, to lounge on the Beach, and watch the curious assemblage as they shifted their grouping, presenting an endless variety of phases and aspects.

The "wreck" was the grand attraction for all the idle and the curious, for many miles ; and carriages, horsemen, and pedestrians lined the Beach in its vicinity, at all hours of the day. Ladies rode or walked down, to look on for awhile, and talk a little nonsense with the courteous bachelor wreck-master.

Gentlemen of leisure strolled on the Beach, to lounge away an unoccupied hour and pick up a little racy gossip,

or listen to the sly jokes and quaint remarks of the men at their work. Speculators from afar came there, on keen look-out for bargains, and school-boys and children to frolic in the sand, and get wet in the waves for nothing. De Koven had thrown himself down one morning, in a little sunny cave between two sheltering sand-banks, and was listlessly watching the movements among the busy operatives about the wreck, when his attention was attracted by a figure, whose grotesque elongation of limb seemed only equaled by the breadth of the pedal and digital members by which they were terminated. He was garbed in a blue carter's frock, descending to his ankles in front, but much curtailed of its "fair proportions" behind; and he jerked his long limbs with a shambling, uneasy movement, as if they had undergone a partial dislocation at the hips. He was brandishing a heavy wagoner's whip, and giving angry utterance to sundry long-winded vituperative denunciations of punishment, for the benefit of a cowering and frightened-looking boy, who was standing in silent awe before him.

"Come, come, Lummux!" said Hardy, who chanced at that moment to be passing near, "what's the row here? Down with your lash. I claim the privilege of doing all the flogging in this beat. What's the boy been at now, in the name of mischief?"

"What's he been at! Why, he's been bringing disgrace on a respectable family: he's been stealing, he has."

"He has, Lummux? That's a bad propensity, to be sure; I hope it is not one of his father's," said Hardy, with a quiet, quizzical expression, a sort of grave enjoyment of a joke wriggling along the curve of his nose.

"One of his father's propensities! To be sure it is.

Ain't I driv him to meetin', and whipped him to Sunday-school, and tried to distil it into him?"

"But, what has he stolen?" asked Hardy, with unmoved gravity.

"This!" thundered Lummux, braying his speech with a trumpet-like twang through his pinched, purple and quivering nasal organ, as he presented, to De Koven's astonishment, the pocket-book which Lundy had so unceremoniously committed to the waves.

"I niver stole it, so, now," said the boy, boldly. "I found it iver so furd off to the eastard, on the Beach; and I niver stoled it, I didn't."

"What did you keep it for, when you knowed twant yourn?" again roared the enraged giant.

"Oh, the boy did not consider," said Mr. Alden, who had come up during the uproar. "It was but a very pardonable delinquency in such a lad. If he restores it now to its owner, he is not so very reprehensible."

"That's what I've especially tried to beat into him; and I've told him, immediately and immediately, to mind my delinkinces and behave himself reprehensible. But I'll catechize him soundly for this," said he, raising his whip, while the boy sunk back skulking behind the listeners, who had gathered round, in great amusement, to hear the unpronounceable words which Lummux was fambus for using.

"You will do nothing of the kind, my gentle giant," said De Koven, coming forward. "The article in dispute is mine. Here, Lundy, come out and tell this man of propensities how all this happened, and clear up this muss, which is the result of your rash casting of cash on the waters."

So, while Lundy told such part of the tale as served the

purpose, De Koven called the boy to him, and, sitting down on the sand, entered into pleasant discourse, and drew from him the story of his finding and fancying that he had a right to appropriate to his own use what he considered so great a treasure.

"And so, your father does put the strap on sometimes," said De Koven, kindly.

"Sometimes, when he wants to make a bluster," said the boy.

"And he gives you good advice too, and teaches you what is right, I suppose?" continued De Koven.

"No, he don't; he talks long-winded yarns, and crooked words, sometimes, but I don't know no good as they does," said the boy, sullenly.

"Well now, if I give you this, what use will you make of it?" said De Koven, showing him a bright, golden coin.

"I'll give it to mother, right straight off," said the boy, with a brightening eye.

"Why will you give it to her?" asked De Koven, with some curiosity as to the promptings of the untutored boy.

"'Cause, you see, she's bin sick, and couldn't do no work, nor arn nothin', and it'll git iver so many nice things to help her along," said the boy, earnestly, as his fingers closed eagerly over the half eagle De Koven placed in his hand.

"There's a good spirit in you, my brave fellow," said De Koven, patting him kindly on the shoulder—"there's a good spirit in you. It should be encouraged, not brutalized and destroyed by flogging. I guess I must take you to sea, and make a man of you."

"You don't approve of using the rod, I infer?" said Mr.

Alden, who had witnessed the little by-play between De Koven and the young finder of the pocket-book.

"Indeed, I do not. I believe it has crushed or perverted more spirits than it ever reclaimed or curbed, making more sneaking, cringing rascals, or desperate, vindictive devils, than anything beside; teaching servile subserviency, under fear of punishment, when it were easier to induce high and ennobling effort, and honest aspirations after the true and the good, by winning first, by generous forbearance, the confiding and grateful affection of those we would serve and save. You say truly, I do not advocate the use of the rod. I would rather have the love than the fear of the humblest heart."

"But Solomon, you know, says 'Spare the rod and spoil the child;' you would not gainsay his wisdom?" said Mr. Alden, good humoredly.

"But I would take it with a qualification," replied De Koven, laughing. "Solomon is called a wise man—the wisest of men, but on some points I cannot but question his wisdom. Among his great army of female felicities, there must have been great varieties of temper, and diversities of character, and endless clashings of interests, with squabbings, and bickerings, and cabalings, which, as he must of course have been umpire, would have sorely tried the old gentleman's patience. Might it not be, that the wise king, in such a predicament, would sometimes have recommended to the shoulders of the child, the rod he would gladly have wielded for the benefit of the mother?"

"Possibly, possibly it might have been as you suggest," replied the good pastor, sending a discreet little clerical laugh up the unbuttoned cuff of his black coat. "I do not dispute your commentary, but really, I don't recollect to

have seen such an exposition of the passage in any of the Fathers."

"Neither do I," replied De Koven, demurely. "But I have not sailed much among the Fathers; my business has not called me into those high latitudes."

"Very true, very true; but if you will look sometimes, a little oftener, perhaps, than you do, my young friend, carefully and prayerfully into that Blessed Book, I will not insist upon your searching out the comments the Fathers have made upon it," said the clergyman, laying his hand with impressive earnestness upon the arm of his companion.

"I will make no promises I may not keep, but I thank you for your kind interest. I feel that I have been too careless, and that your suggestion was needed," replied De Koven, with a tone of sadness in his words, and they walked on.

They sauntered leisurely along on the wet sand, beyond the reach of the inheaving wave, and chatted pleasantly of many things. Recent events had cast a softening shadow over De Koven's mood, naturally buoyant and joyous, so that, without being gloomy, he was somewhat sad, and his thoughts flowed in a deeper and more meditative channel. Sympathy with the sorrow of Evelyn, to whom he was strongly attached, had a powerful influence in producing this unwonted, and (as he thought) womanish feeling. He saw, with the quick and intuitive perception of love, that his friend was unhappy; and that a cause more corroding than natural grief for his recent loss was wringing his heart. It could not be anxiety and alarm, now painfully awakened, with regard to the frail and evidently failing health of his boy, for of that he spoke often and

openly. It could not be the nervous and sensitive delicacy of Ada, for that was no new source of disquietude, and of that, too, he spoke unreservedly.

"Have you seen much of the Evelyns, since the burial of their child?" he asked, of Mr. Alden.

"I have seen them several times," replied Mr. Alden. "By the way, Captain De Koven, is there not something a little wild and unsettled about Mrs. Evelyn? You, of course, know her better than I can, but it has struck me very forcibly more than once."

"I am glad you have mentioned it, for I have been pondering the subject rather painfully," replied De Koven. "It is many months since I have seen her, until my recent meeting with her in Boston, and I was unpleasantly impressed by her abrupt and startled air. More particularly since Edith's death, her language is wild, her manner either cold, haughty, and imperious, or silent, subdued, and tearful, and her whole deportment unaccountably changed. It is evident to me that Evelyn sees it, and that it makes him very wretched. I can't understand it. She certainly loves and reverences her husband, and yet she evidently quails before his eye, and shrinks at his approach. What can it mean?"

"It is probably the effect of sorrow on a nervous and excitable temperament. I can assign no other cause," replied the clergyman.

"Think you, Mr. Alden, that the heart knows no oppression more bitter than sorrow?" asked De Koven, thoughtfully, and hesitatingly propounding his question.

The clergyman looked up, and their eyes met, with a mutual expression of meaning.

"Yes! sin," said he, quietly.

"I have betrayed myself into giving utterance to a thought I was hardly conscious I was harboring," said the young man, coloring; "but, since I have done so, I scarcely wish to recall it. I am about to leave this place soon, and I feel it would be pleasant to know that there is some one to whose kindness I can, in some measure, commit them. Understand me; in Walter Evelyn I have the most perfect and unqualified confidence—the most implicit reliance on his purity as a Christian, his principles as a man, and his untarnished honor as a gentleman. It is only her own wild talk that has shaken my trust in her, and my greatest fear really is, that this may be the foreshadowing of incipient insanity. Terrible, indeed, would such a trial be to Evelyn."

"Let us trust that 'as his day, so shall his strength be,'" replied Mr. Alden.

"Will you dine, gentlemen?" said Hardy, jocosely, as they drew near the rough little building erected on the Beach for the convenience of the "Seine Company," when pursuing their fishing or other sea-shore avocations.

The workmen had suspended their labors for a time, and were seated in groups at short distances one from another, each having catered for himself as he best could. Standing by a superannuated cooking-stove, within the house, Hardy was presiding over the concoction of a huge pot of coffee.

"So you sacrifice to the 'Lares' in here, Hardy," said De Koven, as he put his head in the door-way. "Well, the odor of your incense is not unsavory."

"Walk in, gentlemen—walk in, and take wreckers' cheer," said Hardy, as he busied himself in unpacking his dinner.

"I prefer standing without, among the worshippers of the gentle Penates. I wish to see how they receive homage," said De Koven, laughingly. "Are you sure there are no wicked 'Larvæ' lurking in the spray, to snuff up this steaming incense?"

"I think you will find, among the 'Lares' of Sea-spray, the most prominent and devoutly honored idol in the shape of a tin coffee-pot," said Mr. Alden, falling in easily with De Koven's rattling nonsense. "I always find it, in my calls on my parishioners, any time from eleven to one o'clock, of all the household gods the most conspicuous, occupying its pedestal, and the smoke of the incense continually ascending. By the way, I am not certain that the tin divinity of my own household is not now waiting impatiently in its niche, so I will bid you good morning."

Having thus delivered himself, the good natured clergyman turned on his heel, and walked hurriedly homeward, while De Koven entered into conversation with Hardy, on matters pertaining to the ship and her cargo. After having shared with Hardy his meal in the hut, De Koven walked down with him among the bustling operatives, who were rolling casks and bales, and battling with the surf.

"You have done wonders, Hardy. So you are really sanguine in the faith that my poor craft will float again?"

"I see nothing to hinder, if the weather favors. She's lightened of every thing now; the last lighter will have her freight stowed, and be off before sunset, and we are ready to apply our forces at once. The weather has been almost without a parallel for mildness and calmness, and the ship has lain very easy. I don't think she has been strained very severely. Yes, it is my belief we shall get her off."

All Hardy had said was exactly true. With that promptitude in action for which, in the little world of Sea-spray, he was proverbial, he had communicated with the insurance offices which were interested in the property, and having been at once known as their accredited agent, he had set about the business in hand with his usual sturdy self-reliance; and, meeting no obstacles beyond his power to remove, and brooking no interference from meddling officiousness in any quarter, he had brought things on thus far toward a prosperous issue. A few hours more of mild weather, and the fate of the good ship Orphan would cease to be a question of doubt.

De Koven moved about on the Beach restlessly. He began to feel nervous, for his feelings were deeply interested, independent of all pecuniary considerations, in the event of the attempt about to be made.

The ship, which lay in its naked helplessness where, in darkness and tempest, misguidance had stranded her, had been his home since his earliest manhood. It had been one of the last acts of his father's careful affection to watch the progress of her construction, and to lavish on her finish and decorations every thing that could add to her beauty, or enhance her value. But he did not live to see the completion, dying suddenly a short time previous to her launching—an overwhelming affliction—to which was attributable De Koven's sad appropriation of a name belonging at once to the ship and her master—"The Orphan"—as indeed he was, alone, save the faithful and unflinching Lundy, knowing and claiming no tie of kindred with any human being; and, with the exception of the Evelyns, having no strong friendships, it was not strange that he was sometimes reckless, and often wayward. It was not strange that, spend-

ing his life as he had done, on the ocean, in the constant contemplation of all the wonders of that most stupendous of God's wonderful works, he should have much imaginative, poetical, reverential, religious feeling, without any established orthodox religious faith ; that he should make the winds and the waves, the elements in which he lived and moved, his mediums of worship ; that he should learn fear from their stormy grandeur, and relying love from their solemn beauty.

He had, then, a system of spiritual ethics which satisfied himself. He was prettily and poetically religious, with all intellectual and sentimental refinements, without being scripturally or practically pious ; but he was good, noble, generous, conscientious in the discharge of every duty to his kind : scrupulous, morbidly so, with regard to gentlemanly honor in all his transactions with men. Pure in his morals, strictly taintless and temperate in his habits, he offered a splendid foundation on which to rear the superstructure of a holier, happier faith.

The last article had been secured, and the last lighter spread her canvas to the breeze. A long, loud cheer went up from the Beach, and was answered from her deck as she glided away.

"Not a speck nor a splinter !—not a rope's-end left !—everything swept up clean ! Hard times for poor folks such racks as this. I 'spect they'll git the hull off too, and there'll be no chance at that," spoke a gruff, growling, discontented voice in the crowd, as the lighter stood on her way. De Koven turned in amused surprise to look on the speaker.

"Ye powers, what a capital to surmount such a column !" he exclaimed, to Hardy, who was standing near, and had

heard the characteristic remark of the disappointed expectant of "perquisites," not "plunder." Hardy laughed.

"Our friend Gulchen does but speak the sentiments of more men than himself, who are not satisfied with liberal wages for their time, but expect to find a great amount of floating "treasure trove" besides—odds and ends, stoved barrels and burst bales, torn canvas, and chafed rigging, and broken cabin furniture, kegs, kettles, and cans—anything and everything that is not worth freight or deck-room. He says true: we have made a clean sweep this time. Well, it is a hard service, and they do earn good pay, and they always get it. It is the lookers-on, not the active laborers, that grumble."

"It is hard service," replied De Koven. "I have been surprised to see how kindly these men take to the water. I thought you were all cultivators of the soil."

"Oh, we are an amphibious race, sometimes cawing with the crows upon the corn, and sometimes with the sharks, preying upon the little fishes; but we like this shore work, and we avail ourselves of all opportunities and excuses—whaling, fishing, and, if occasion offers, wrecking, for a frolic in the surf. You have seen that we take it all very coolly."

"Coolly, indeed," said De Koven, shivering, "working up to the armpits in the sea in December! My teeth chatter, sailor though I am, to think of it. But, truly, you have done up this work bravely."

"Yes, yes, he's well enough pleased; you no need to tell him on't. He's 'cute enough for rich folks, but he makes dry rackin' for us, poor, hard workin' men. Don't help them much such racks as this; I would not thank a body for sich a one once a week. The capun's a bachelor.

I reckon, if he had to find vittles for a woman and two or three young ones, he'd find 'twas hard scratchin' :” and the speaker looked sour and dissatisfied, while De Koven listened in undisguised amusement.

He was a rare specimen of Sea-spray statuary—a short, square, dumpy block, surmounted by a capital at which De Koven might well exclaim, “ye powers!”—a skull, before whose capacious frontal developments the magnificent brow of Daniel Webster would have dwindled into insignificance; under which gleamed a pair of little, restless gray eyes, deep set, and overshadowed by shaggy gray eyebrows; while on either side spread certain assinine appendages to which the most potent of Elfland spells could hardly have rendered Titania oblivious.

“I am sorry,” said De Koven, “that Hardy has not afforded you better pickings. There will, perhaps, be a change of administration before long, and then you must try and get him removed. Perhaps you will be able to have some one appointed in his place, who will have more sympathy with your very reasonable complaints, and a more indulgent eye to your interests. Meantime, don't feel discouraged; the next shipwreck may be attended with more disastrous results. It is your duty to hope for the best, at all events.”

The Relief schooner was busy in her operations, manœuvring with great caution and skill to bring her powerful means and appliances to bear on the ship. De Koven was fidgety and nervously anxious, so Hardy proposed that they should go up to the village and get tea, and return with some preparations for a comfortable bivouac in the hut, that they might witness the proceedings, and have the earliest possible knowledge of their result.

"Lundy," said Hardy, "we shan't have you on the Beach to-night, for you are feverish now. You must stay at home and spin a yarn for the women, and they in return shall give you a bowl of hot gruel and a warm bed."

Lundy began to put in a demurrer, but De Koven decided the question at once, saying he intended to pass the night in the hut with Hardy, and there would be no room. "Besides," continued he, "Hardy is going to give me the history of all his love affairs, and our conversation will be strictly confidential."

After a refreshing meal, and an hour's lounging over a crackling fire, they took their way once more to the Beach, with an accumulation of wrappers, and a basket of sundry delicious meats and appetising condiments, with which to while away the hours of their self-imposed watch. After kindling a fire in the old stove, they strolled out and along the Beach, watching the schooner in her various manoeuvres, and talking of business arrangements made and to be made.

"Do you believe, Hardy, that man with the ears did speak the thoughts of any one but himself?"

"Yes, I know he did. In every community there is a class of men who make it their business to prey upon their fellows. Of course Sea-spray is not exempt; neither is she peculiar in that particular. Daring, open-handed villainy is not known among us. We are a peaceable, inoffensive people; rioting and brawling are not among our easily besetting sins, and the most extensive robberies we have to fear, do not extend beyond the taking a pair of fowls from the perch, a ham from the smoke-house, or a pair of stockings or a shirt from the bleaching ground. Our greatest annoyances are from little, sneaking, petty rascalities, too

contemptible for the cognizance of law. But, take us all together, we are a God-fearing, law-abiding, honest little nest of hornets."

"I believe you—I do earnestly believe you—and I shall always think the better of mankind for your sakes. What a beautiful night!"

Well, indeed, might he say so. The moon was shining as none but a Sea-spray moon ever did or could shine, sending down, over sea and shore, her sparkling and silvery sheen, and laving meadow and upland, tree, roof and hedge, in a shimmering flood of flashing and molten glory. Not the pale, sickly, vapory splendor of now-a-days laureldom—nothing of that kind—it was the veritable Napoleon glory of moonshine, which, having admired and shivered in for awhile, Hardy and De Koven were glad to leave for the more comfortable neighborhood of the creaking and cracking old stove, now red and glowing with redundant heat.

De Koven threw himself on the sand within the hut, and communed with his own thoughts, giving speech at length, and embodying them in words, in substance thus :

"It is strange, Hardy, how things happen in this world. That I should have been sent here to find kindness and friends, and form life-enduring attachments among a people of whose existence I had never had knowledge. I feel almost as if there was design in it."

"Do you doubt that there was, De Koven?"

"I don't think I do exactly doubt, but I don't understand. I have had more serious, unanswerable thoughts, since I have been here, than I ever had before. But what end can be served by sending me here, paying keelage for such a port in the sand?"

"You have spoken one of your unanswerable thoughts,

but some wise end, without doubt. We are all but links in that endless concatenation by which the destiny of every human being is chained to that of his fellow; and I believe there is no act of our lives, however unimportant, even in the trivial details of our every day duties, which has not its bearing on the acts, and its influence, however remote, and unnoted it may be, on the destinies, of others. It might have been some trifling delay, some neglected or procrastinated duty of some obscure or unimportant individual, that caused your being here. But the Great Cause was over all, not the less, and ordered it for purposes involving, perhaps, the destiny of individuals you may never know."

"You are a far-seeing diviner, Hardy, as far as things past are concerned, for it was a sudden and slight indisposition, delaying the arrival in Boston of a gentleman with whom I had important business transactions, which detained me one day. Had it not been for that lost day, I should have reached New-York before the storm. Little the poor fellow thought what important consequences would result from that inopportune and mischievous freak in his system. As little as I know what inconveniences and mishaps may arise from this troublesome link in the great chain of which I form a link. One thing I do know, it has made one grave on the hill-side, which could not have been looked for. How many hearts would have shuddered and sunk, with a dread of bereavement and sorrow, if it could have been known that a grave was to be opened where that one was opened. It is a blessed thing, Hardy, that we cannot foresee, since we cannot avert!"

"Very true. 'It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.'"

De Koven was silent for a long time, resting his head on

his hand as he reclined. He looked out upon the moonlit ocean, and his thoughts wandered far away, lost in the mazes of mysticism, and among the fables of poetical and idolatrous pagan dreamers. At length he spoke :

"This is the hour over which the Manes preside—the dreamy, vapory hour when night melts into morning; and this moonlight ocean shore is a fitting temple for the votaries of the divinities of the dead. Hardy, do you believe in the gods of the tombs and the dead?"

"I have never had time nor taste for such heathenish mythological nonsense. Do think of better things."

"It is nonsense, I grant, thus personifying and classifying vague imaginings; but it proves the inquiring, and curious, and dissatisfied longings of the spirit, in all ages, after the knowledge that is unattainable—the seeking to penetrate the impenetrable—which is still one of the strong stirrings of the restless energy within us. You have had time to think, Hardy. Give me the benefit of your cogitations."

"It has been no part of my business to solve mysteries. I have been satisfied to regulate my own actions, and to order my own daily walk and conversation, according to the known requirements of scriptural and Christian duty; to cleanse my thoughts of all impurities, and my heart of all mean, malicious, unholy feelings and motives. This is business enough for one life-time, without wasting any thought upon what affords no help towards its accomplishment."

"All very true and right, but you have a theory on this subject—you can't be so practical on an impracticable point. The spirits of the departed, Hardy, where are they?"

"I don't pretend to meddle with that question. If any man can tell, to the satisfaction or enlightenment of another, I am willing to admit he is a wiser man than I am. Those things which God has seen fit to hide from the comprehension of man, I am content should remain hidden. I know enough for my own guidance—more than I shall ever be able to give account for."

"There is just this difference between you and me, Hardy. You are a trusting, practical, common sense Christian—I am a discontented, doubting, dreaming, unstable cavalier, wishing to know, but unwilling to learn."

So they talked away the night, without being much the wiser in the morning.

CHAPTER VII.

LUNDY (who, to use a phrase much in vogue in Sea-spray, had been for several days rather "down at the heel with this great cold") followed the directions of his younger companions, and remained at home, comfortably installed in the great lined rocking-chair, (that never-failing accessory to fireside enjoyment, without which no apartment in Sea-spray was considered "furnished.") In this irksome home-keeping he was carefully ministered unto with herb teas, and gruel, and "stewed quaker," and all manner of approved remedies for all sorts of known ailments, and entertained the while with much lively and amusing chat, by Mrs. Godrick, the widowed sister of Hardy, who presided with much graceful dignity over the domestic economy of his commodious and hospitable establishment.

The little work-table was planted in its accustomed nook, the lights were trimmed, the fire abundantly replenished, and the hearth swept with the nicest possible finish—it being a feat in broomcraft not easily attained, to sweep skilfully around, without moving the andirons or disturbing the fire. So the neat little parlor was light and cheerful in the blaze of an old-fashioned wood fire—for, with a pertinacious contempt for fuel-saving discomforts, Hardy condemned stoves, those ill-favored demons of darkness,

which have blotted out from the old catalogue of home and household joys that most delightful of all terms for social and family communings, the sweet, "between-lights" fireside twilight—that pleasant-breathing spell between the toils of day and the busy occupations of evening, when the shadows step out from dark corners, and dance and float on the jambs, and leap up and flicker and faint on the walls, and swing in the folds of the curtains, as the flames flash up or grow dim, while the faces we love look loveliest in the flush of that fire-light glow. Out upon stoves, the grim usurpers! They or their inventors have much to answer for, in banishing the poetry of twilight from the hearth, and filling up images of darkness to frown by the darkened hearth, and overshadow the ingle-side's cheerful blaze.

In the light of the ruddy flame, then, sat Lundy, cozily toasting his feet and sipping his savory sudorifics.

"Lundy," said Mrs. Godrick, a little shade of discontent flitting over her pleasant countenance—"Lundy, I am very apprehensive those boys will have rather an undesirable location to-night. It was an absurdity I did not by any means give my countenance to. But what can you expect of these young creatures? What can they know of life?"

"Captain De Koven is not very old, it is true; but he has seen something of life. He has crowded a great many changes and stirring experiences into a short space of time."

"Undoubtedly he has, Lundy. I shall regret to part with Captain De Koven very much. He is decidedly a very pleasant little fellow."

"Do you call Clarence De Koven a little fellow, Mrs.

Godrick? I should consider him as rather above the ordinary pattern for a man," said Lundy, who seemed disposed to quarrel with Mrs. Godrick's mode of expression, which, in her vocabulary, was only a pet substitute for "young gentleman."

Mrs. Godrick quickly unrolled her work—a most elaborate piece of complicated patchwork, which she was industriously preparing for quilting, and made no reply to Lundy's defence of his Captain's proportions.

"You have been a long time with De Koven, Lundy; you are undoubtedly much attached to him," remarked Mrs. Godrick, with much tact, avoiding any curtailment of patronymics, or any use of familiar diminutives, by which she might inadvertently provoke the ire of her companion, who seemed very sensitive with regard to any expression which hinted derogation of De Koven's dignity.

"I have been with him from his birth, and in the service of his family since my own. You must know, Mrs. Godrick, that, in good old England, servants are not what they are here, always changing service, and struggling and striving for the upper hand, claiming equality, and disputing for precedence; but a good servant is a lifetime friend, faithful and deferential in prosperity, and more faithful and respectful and devoted in adversity.

"Well, the old master and mistress, the grand-parents of Clarence, lived in princely, old-fashioned, hospitable style, on a fine old place in Lancashire. The estate had come unexpectedly to the mistress, from an old gentleman, a far-off relation she had never had any knowledge of. The master held a commission in the navy, and they were living very pleasantly on a pretty little property, with one child, and my father and mother lived with them, as mas-

ter's man and lady's maid. So, when they came suddenly into possession of the great estate, they disposed of the pretty home where they had been so happy; the master retired from the service, and man and maid went with them to the great hall in the lordly park, and they lived surrounded by luxuries, and with troops of friends; and their tenantry loved and revered them, and the poor in their parish blessed and prayed for them, and for a number of years all went on happily, when, all at once, up started a new claimant from beyond the seas, and he proved himself nearer of kin, and he was the heir. But he was liberable and kind, and gave them no trouble, but made them welcome to all they had used of income, and so on; and so they had been rich some ten or twelve years, and they were none the worse for that. Then they relinquished the grand place, but they did not like living within its shadow, for Master Tom was a proud-spirited boy, and he felt the change more than any of them, and they concluded to come to America, and breathe the fresh free air of the wild New World. So John and Jane, the man and the maid, must needs get married and come too, for they could not leave the kind master and mistress they had served so long, and Master Tom, who was the red drop in their hearts.

"They came to New-York, and the master engaged in business, and was prosperous, and was respected and widely known in his new land, and, in due time, Jack Lundy claimed a footing on the earth. There was nothing very remarkable, that I recollect took place in the family, and time passed along pleasantly, and fortunes prospered, till Master Tom was a man and master of a ship, and Jack Lundy was a big, burly boy, a sort of tolerated nuisance

in the house, for the sake of those who claimed the honor of owning him, in whose honest, humble hearts—God bless them!—he was the very core and centre. They sent him to school, to keep him out of mischief, and set him at such sort of service as he was willing to render. Master Tom was off and on, sailing between New-York and Liverpool, and if the old folks loved him, poor Jack fairly worshipped even the shadow of his shoe-strings. So when he was about twelve years old, Master Tom being on the point of sailing, Jack walks into the little parlor where he was eating his breakfast, and bids him good-bye with a great fuss, then runs up to his room and steals a spare shirt or two, with a few other indispensables, and slipping out unperceived, makes for the ship, and telling the mate that Master Tom sent him, gets into a place of concealment, and keeps out of sight till the ship is fairly outside the dock.

“Master Tom scolded me roundly for the grief I had occasioned at home, but I had provided for all that by leaving a note with a confidential schoolmate, to be delivered after the ship was off, and I knew they would be easy if I was only with Master Tom. So, from that time, I sailed with him as a sort of personal attendant, cabin boy, waiter, anything to be where he was.

“After a year or two, Master Tom came on board one day that we were to sail from Liverpool, with a blue-eyed, rosy-cheeked, lovely young creature, his new married bride; and an angel in human form she was, and there was not one on board who did not think her good, and grand, and beautiful enough, even for Master Tom; and that was capping the climax of commendation beyond all possibility of improving. Master Tom made her his idol, and if he did not say his prayers to her, he came very near it,—he worshipped her in his heart, anyhow.

“Well, one time he was bringing her home to leave her with his mother awhile, for she had hoisted signals of distress, and needed a pilot. We had had head winds, and no winds, and the voyage was a tedious one, and Master Tom began to look terribly anxious, and to pace the deck with a sad cloud on his brow, which he always shook off, though, at the cabin door. But it was of no use, for one night it was blowing a regular gale, and he did not dare to leave the deck, and Master Clarence must needs add to the uproar by piping up in the midst of it.

“She had her nurse and women-servants along, and the cabin she usually occupied was fitted for a queen, and she had all attendance, and everything else she could have had anywhere, and all things went well, and as for Master Tom, he was the happiest man alive.

“We were within a day or so of port, when something went wrong: there was one of those unfortunate turns, that will sometimes happen, nobody knows how or why, and the pale young mother knew that she must die. But she did not tell Master Tom at first, for she had talked with me, and I told her we were nearing port, and encouraged her to think she might reach it alive.

“It was not to be, and she knew it better than any of us, and she called me, and gave the babe into my arms, and she said: “Jack, you love Master Tom beyond every other creature, I know,—for his sake, more than for mine, you will love my child. Promise me, Jack, that you will keep with him, watch him in his boyhood, and be a faithful friend to his manhood. Take care of him, Jack, as long as he needs your care, and, if he is sometimes harsh or ungrateful, for my sake bear with him, for with my dying hands I have committed him to your care. My blessing rest upon

you, and God reward you, as you deal with my boy. I promised, with my hand on the boy's head, and I believe I have not failed in my trust. The next day she died, and before the next we were in New-York."

"Life-like, Lundy; and how did Master Tom bear it?" inquired Mrs. Godrick, who had not uttered one word during Lundy's long narrative.

"He bore it as a brave man and a Christian should. His heart was almost broken, but he was calm and patient. The old mistress and my mother took the babe, and, as I did not think my promise required it, while he was so small, I followed Master Tom. As soon as the boy was out of petticoats, his father took him to sea, and then my care commenced. When the boy was left home to go to school, it was my business to take charge of him. After awhile, the old folks all passed away, and then Clarence went with his father when he chose. Sometimes he was under masters in Liverpool, and sometimes in New-York, and sometimes he had a tutor on ship-board, and in that way he got what education he has, enough for all useful purposes, and some for the ornamental, I suppose, for he dances enough for his health, plays the flute and the piano, and dabbles a little with pencils and brushes, and jabbbers French, German and Italian, and reads newspapers and novels, and knows something of general politics; but is no scholar, no philosopher, no politician or poet, no genius of any sort, and I don't believe he will set the ocean on fire as long as it is as cold as it generally is. But just as he is, I would not change a hair of his head to have him like the best man on earth, rather than Clarence De Koven."

So saying, Lundy took up the tongs and carefully adjusted the fire, while Mrs. Godrick spread out her patchwork and surveyed it with an air of serene satisfaction.

"Will he feel this interruption to his business any great inconvenience, in a pecuniary point of view?" asked the lady, folding up her work as she spoke.

"Not he—he has money enough. His mother was an heiress, and his grandfather and his father both made fortunes. He keeps afloat because he is restless and lonely on land. The sea is his natural element, and he takes to it like a fish."

"Was it not a wild freak of his, not leaving his ship, when everybody thought she would certainly go to pieces?"

"It was, but it was just like him. He had made a sort of vow to his own soul, to be satisfied to lose his own life and property, if he could only see his crew and passengers safe on the land. When it was done, he felt himself in honor bound to keep his word to his own conscience. He was desperate about the Evelyns, and almost in a state of delirium after they were off. He is very excitable, and after that is over, sometimes absent and dreamy-like. I can generally rouse him by making him angry. I don't feel, Mrs. Godrick, that I am free from my promise to his poor young mother yet."

"I am very sorry they are not at home, foolish fellows," said Mrs. Godrick, whirling round her pie on the hearth.

In reply to which, Lundy expressed his opinion that they could take care of themselves, and after swallowing sundry medicaments, took his light and bade Mrs. Godrick "good night;" to which she responded, "Purple slumbers to you, Lundy."

CHAPTER VIII.

IN the retirement of their own private apartments, Evelyn and Ada spent the first days of sadness and desolate loneliness of heart. Edith had been to them—to him more especially—the object of constant and engrossing tenderness and care. Shut out by her melancholy deprivation from so many of the ordinary sources of amusement, and deprived as she had been, by her own timid and nervous temperament, and her mother's capricious avoidance of all intercourse with general society, of all the advantages of training and teaching which skill and philanthropy had placed within the reach of her unfortunate class, she clung with the more tenacious and exacting grasp to those who could understand and appreciate her best, and consequently could reach most readily the few avenues through which enjoyment and intelligence could be conveyed to her mind. But it was an untutored and uncurbed spirit at best. Though gentle and loving towards those to whom it was attached, it needed the vigilant eye, and the tender but steady hand of untiring affection, to guide and govern it. To Ada's indolent and self-indulgent disposition, the task was too irksome; and, while she lavished upon her all kinds of injudicious and pernicious indulgences, and petted and caressed her with extravagant fondness, she shrunk

from all participation or acquiescence in the pursuance of system, or in the carrying out of any plans for wholesome and indispensable discipline, putting aside, with petulant or querulous objections, all appeals to her judgment, or propositions for her co-operation. It was a difficult task for Evelyn; but he was strong in the might of an overwhelming and self-sacrificing love, and to the helpless child his slightest look or gesture was law; while against the feeble and capricious authority sometimes assumed by her mother, she rebelled with indignant and scornful gesticulations. Exercising entire dominion over Ernest, his sister loved him with a pure, unselfish love; and a look of sorrow on his sweet, pale face, or a tear in his mild blue eye, would subdue her most overbearing mood, and bring her, with a silent caress, to his side. So there was always peace and gentle joy in their pure and peculiar methods of interchanging intelligence, while they pursued their speechless sports together. And Ernest drooped and pined for his accustomed play-mate, unused to and unfitted for the rougher sports and more boisterous amusements appropriate to his sex and age.

Rest and quiet had restored the physical energies of the mother and the boy, and Evelyn began to look with an anxious eye upon the dreamy and imaginative character, and effeminate habits of the lovely and singular child. Singular, he in truth was; a perfect child in his simple, earnest truthfulness. There was not the first thought of guile in his open, honest little heart. A child in his ignorance of evil, in thought or practice, and his unsuspecting and confiding love for every one with whom he held intercourse. He was sometimes startlingly mature in his reflections, and quaintly original in his modes of expression.

Having had so little use for oral language in his intercourse with the only playmate his companionless childhood had ever known, he often in his earnestness forgot to apply spoken mediums of thought, and surprised and pained his father with his speechless gesticulations. "This must be remedied, if possible," was Evelyn's thought, when first his attention was awakened to the too evident peculiarity.

Engrossed as his whole heart had been, in its protecting and cherishing love for Edith, had he indeed been heedless of the claims of his son? His heart acquitted him; for in his love for his children he had known no degree or shade of difference. He knew he was guiltless of partiality or favoritism, but, in the stronger demands on his care, which the helplessness of the one had given her, had he not overlooked what was due to the other? He felt that he had, and that it was a duty, now deep and imperative, to counteract, quickly, the involuntary mischief. In this it was painful to feel that he must act unaided and alone. It was useless to look to Ada for counsel or sympathy; for counsel she was incompetent, for sympathy, alas! she would have felt herself defrauded, had he spoken to her of expending his own on any object independent of herself. His only course, at present, was to go out with Ernest himself, to seek amusements for him, and to accustom him to the companionship of children, and to the more bracing and athletic sports of boys.

In this, he looked to Allen as his assistant and coadjutor. The two or three weeks which had elapsed since they first found a home in Sea-spray, had passed on in uninterrupted seclusion, varied only by intercourse with the family in which they resided, by frequent but hurried calls from De Koven, and an occasional visit from Mr. Alden and his

lady, a diffident, self-distrusting, lovely woman, zealously co-operating in all good works, earnest and anxious in her benevolent efforts, and searching out and relieving with a sympathising heart, and a bountiful, unsparing hand, all the suffering children of destitution and neglect, yet keeping herself as much as possible out of sight, and hiding from her left hand all knowledge of the generous doings of her right. To her, Ada was an object of deep commiseration, she seemed so gentle and uncomplaining, so delicately and transcendently sweet in her graceful, sorrowing loveliness, that she longed to take her to her heart, and speak words of consolation and love. To her husband, more penetrating and more deeply read in the dark volume of worldly wisdom, and in that book of contradictions and mysteries, the human heart, there was something less attractive in the demeanor of Ada, something hidden if not heartless—a certain indescribable shadowing of concealment and want of ingenuousness, mingled, it is true, with strong manifestations of tenderness and winning gentleness of heart. To him she was a mystery; and since his conversation with De Koven, many little incidents had been noted as corroborative of the ideas they both entertained, of actual concealment or threatened aberration of mind.

The Christmas season was close at hand, and Evelyn sat pondering schemes for cheering and entertaining Ernest and Ada. Ada sat languidly swinging back in her chair, enveloped in her wrapper, and rolling her luxurious shawl about her, with a sort of drowsy consciousness of personal comfort. Ernest had been for a long time sedulously occupied in spinning a big humming-top, which Allen had given him; but he was weary now, so he came forward to the fire, and, complaining that his fingers were cold, and

his head heavy, he drew his little bench to his mother's side, and laid his head in her lap.

"Oh—do get away, Ernest ; you weary and worry me," said Ada, with a peevish, impatient tone.

The child rose instantly, the tears welling up in his soft sad eyes, as Evelyn opened his arms to receive him. A flush spread over Evelyn's pale brow, not unnoted by Ada. She felt that on Ernest's behalf she had incurred his displeasure, and with a resentful feeling toward the child, she went on to make matters worse.

"Don't, Ernest, be such a blubbering baby ; I was only thinking of far-off times, and you startled me. You are very troublesome."

"I did not mean to be, mother. I am very sorry," said the grieved and sobbing boy.

"Ernest," said Evelyn, making no comment upon Ada's half apologetic remark, "I was just thinking how we would keep our Christmas. I don't know what we can do here in Sea-spray, where there are no shops for us to buy toys."

"I don't care much for toys, papa. If I could buy a heart like Allen's, that never aches, a right merry little heart, papa, always singing like a bird, I should be glad of Christmas," and the gentle boy laid his aching head on his father's shoulder, and closed his weary eyes. Evelyn looked at Ada ; he could not help the reproachful glance with which his eye rested on her.

"Nonsense, Walter. Don't encourage that great boy in being such a soft-hearted simpleton," said Ada, resolutely determined not to admit that she had been cruel.

"It is a fault of which his mother, at least, is not guilty just now. Do you consider yourself soft-hearted to-day, Ada ?"

Ada burst into tears.

"No, no, Walter ; I am perverse and irritable, and nervous, and wretched."

Almost for the first time in their wedded life Walter did not respond to the appeal with soothing and caresses. Oh, nerves, nerves ! abused and vilified scape-goats. For how much ill-temper, and peevishness, and selfish disregard, and heartless wounding of the feelings of others, have they been wickedly made accountable !

Ada wept, long and bitterly. She had wounded her child ; she had offended her husband ; and she was dissatisfied with herself.

"Walter," she said at length, "I am very wretched."

"I see it, Ada. But should that be an excuse for unkindness to Ernest ? Be peevish and perverse with me, if you will. Perhaps I sometimes wound you ; but I cannot have the tender heart of our child stung by unmerited rebuke."

"I deserve your reproof, Walter. I was harsh with my innocent child ; but, if you knew the weight that is crushing my heart, and all but maddening my brain, I am sure you would pity and pardon my pettish, unreasonable whims."

"If I knew, Ada ; and do I not know all your causes of grief ? You sometimes speak strange words. Have you any secret cause of uneasiness ? Why do I not know ? Sure, Ada, there can be nothing weighing on your heart in which I am not equally interested ? Why do you withhold your confidence ? Have you aught to conceal ?"

"Nothing, Walter ; nothing but weakness and folly."

And Ada bent down her head to kiss her sleeping boy ; but the action could not conceal from her husband the

deadly pallor that had spread itself over her cheeks, lips and brows. Evelyn laid the boy on his bed ; and, drawing his chair in front of Ada, he sat down and took her trembling hands in his. His look was calm, but stern and resolute, as he fixed it on the now flushed cheek of his wife."

"Ada," he began—"Ada, the time has come for me to ask your confidence. I cannot shut my eyes to the conviction that you have some cause of disquiet which you will not speak. Is there anything undone that I can do ? Is there any arrangement I can make which will conduce to your happiness ? Do you want anything that love can bestow or wealth procure ?"

"Nothing, Walter ; nothing. You are only too tender and too indulgent. I have all—more than all I desire. Give me only your continued love, and I will ask no more."

"Have I been cold or unkind, Ada, that you ask such a thing ? Tell me what it is that has changed you so strangely ; for you are changed, Ada, sadly, sorrowfully changed."

Ada shook her head deprecatingly, but made no reply ; and Evelyn continued :

"We have lived a roaming, unsettled life, Ada ; and I begin to think that, for our dear Ernest's sake, we should choose some pleasant location, and make him a permanent home. I have thought that you might possibly be pining now under the pressure of an untried sorrow for your childhood's home."

Ada startled and trembled.

"If you wish, Ada, I will take you back to your English home. 'The world is all before us, where to choose,' and I have wealth to win a home in any land. Will you go to England ?"

"Never, Walter, never! Oh, God forbid that," gasped Ada, sinking back, almost fainting, in her chair. "Here, Walter, here, where our blessed Edith reposes—let me remain here. Oh, the thought of leaving this place, how it palsied my heart!"

"Is then the dread of leaving Sea-spray the terror that has troubled you?" asked Evelyn, delighted with the idea that he had fathomed the cause of Ada's deep depression. "How could you be so childish as to let that thought so disturb you? Do I understand you now? Is it your wish that we remain where we are, and buy or build us a nest in this pretty retreat? Then that is settled. We are to make Sea-spray our home. I cannot tell you, Ada, how happy I shall be in the anticipation; and we will begin to explore all the pretty localities, and find some sweet nook in which we will rear us a shelter and a home. It will be well for our boy, for I am sure this is a peaceful, pure little place."

Evelyn was relieved of a load of sad, troublous care. He had discovered one cause of Ada's unhappiness, and it was in his power to remove it.

"Allen," said Evelyn, when he next met Allen at the tea-table, "how do boys keep Christmas in Sea-spray? I wish to join you, with Ernest, and see how we can have the most enjoyment."

"I don't know," replied the laughing boy, "that there is any particular way of spending Christmas more than other days. Sea-spray boys always have something in the way of play going on. If there's ice we skate; if not, when it's pleasant, we play ball, or prison base, or pitch quoits. If it is not fit weather for out-of-door plays, we roast corn, or make candy, or play checkers, or tell stories and riddles,

and build boats or cross-guns. We always find play enough."

"So it seems. I think I shall have to apprentice Ernest to you this winter. Will you teach him to play?"

Allen thought it was a strange boy that needed to be taught to play; but he promised very readily to take him as an apprentice to the business of seeking amusement; for he liked the gentle, queer little stranger, and they were soon sworn friends.

"Oh, Clarence, I am so glad you have come," said Ernest, the next day, as De Koven entered the little sitting-room in which Ernest and Allen were amusing themselves. Ernest was shelling the little pearly kernels of his chicken corn into a neat little basket, while Allen was shaking, by its long, slender handle, the pretty wire-box in which he was skilfully popping the grain.

"Only look, Clarence, it is so nice;" and the delighted child presented to his friend the store of soft, snowy pulps, which had been subjected to the heating process.

"Well, Ernest, do you find it pleasant in Sea-spray?"

"Indeed I do, Clarence. There are lots of good-natured boys here; and, do you know, papa has put me to school to Allen, and what do you think I am learning?"

"Something pleasant, I am certain, Ernest, for you look very smiling just now."

"That's just it, Clarence. I am learning to play and be happy. Allen says I am a good scholar and I believe I am; for you see, Clarence, I have learned already to let my heart laugh."

"Did you have to learn that, Ernest? You are somewhat young to need such a lesson."

"Yes! but you know, Clarence, sometimes there are

weary old hearts in weak young bodies. But see, Allen has done another basket full—oh, how beautiful! And so, Clarence, they say you will get off our dear old Orphan. Do you think you will?"

"I hope she will float to-day, Ernest; and I shall be off, if she does, in a day or two, for New-York."

"Oh, I am sorry you are going, Clarence; but you will be so glad to be at sea again. I am glad for you, Clarence, but I am sorry for myself. You will come to Sea-spray again?"

"Yes, I think I shall, Ernest, for I hear you are to make it your home. Yes, I shall come and see you before I go off. It will take some time to get the poor, battered ship ready for sea, and I shall come down and see what progress you make in your studies under Allen's tuition."

"I shall learn a great many things. I am going to see the boys skate, and then I shall have skates, and try to skate myself; and next summer, Clarence—oh, next summer, we shall go fishing, and frogging, and crabbing, and all sorts of berrying." A sad shadow passed over the face of the boy. "Oh no, not all sorts of burying, for one is burying our friends. Oh, dear, blessed Edith, did I like to forget you?" And, laying his face on De Koven's arm, he sobbed at the bitter thought.

"Well, now, Ernest, I must look in on your father a few minutes, and then I am off for the Beach, for the last time this winter, I hope. What shall I send you to keep Christmas with, from New-York?"

"Oh, lots of nice things; but mind you, Clarence, let them be things that will bear dividing, for I could not enjoy what I could not share. I've always had some one to share my Santa Claus," said the little boy, with a weak, tremulous utterance, "so now it shall be Allen."

The boys went on with their sports ; now with marbles and top, and then with their miniature ship, which they were preparing for next summer's sailing. Ernest, often in his eagerness to communicate a thought, or enforce an argument, forgetting speech, and gesticulating and making signs and grimaces, till recalled to consciousness by Allen's look of wonder, the flush of confusion and shame would burn on his pale cheek, and the tears, awakened by painful associations, would gather on his lids.

CHAPTER IX.

LUNDY came down to the breakfast-room the next morning in a more comfortable state of health. With regard to the color of his slumbers, he made no remark, simply stating that they had been sound and refreshing, "thanks to Mrs. Godrick's good nursing."

"I suspect, Lundy, those foolish boys will be willing to come home for a hot breakfast by this time. Is not that your opinion?" inquired Mrs. Godrick, as she busied herself in arranging her table.

"It is not unlikely that they may. I hardly think the ship is off yet, and they will have nothing to detain them on the Beach."

At this moment Hardy and De Koven made their appearance, crossing the fields in the rear of the house, and entered, as Mrs. Godrick was placing her smoking cakes on the table:

"Ah! here you are," said the lady, as the pale, weary-looking sojourners of the Beach entered the breakfast-room. "Just in time, just in time for my hot breakfast; famished, too, I'll bet a cooky."

De Koven flung himself into a chair by the fire and laughed, while Hardy bustled about, with questions and orders on many subjects of out-of-doors and household arrangements.

"A pretty wild-goose chase you have had, keeping watch of the sea. What have you gained?"

"A regular tom-fool's errand, Mrs. Godrick. We might better have been in our own comfortable lodgings at home, for anything we have seen or done. However, we have had a very sociable, pleasant night, and, let me tell you, Lundy, Hardy's experience is very well worth a cold night by the sea-side."

"Suppose we have it over again," said Lundy. "I am not too old to learn, and my love affairs are all to come."

"You had better eat your breakfast," said Hardy, "and let love affairs alone. They are worse than sand-banks or land-falls in a squall."

"Speaking from experience, Captain?" said Lundy, gravely.

"From observation, more particularly," replied Hardy, quietly helping himself to a replenishing of cakes, hot and smoking, from the griddle.

"Ah! Captain Hardy, your advice is not needed in my good friend Lundy's case. He is wedded, heart and soul, to the welfare of that scape-grace, Clarence De Koven; and many a scrape has his good sense and his kind heart steered the fellow clear of. I am not sure that he would not have found himself and his fortunes in life 'brought up all standing' upon worse land-falls than Sea-spray Beach, more times than he cares to mention, but for that same unflinching pilot, Jack Lundy, God bless him!"

De Koven ended with considerable manifestation of feeling, a subject commenced in light-hearted badinage.

"Then you are really likely to be off to-day, Captain De Koven? But I hope you will visit Sea-spray at a more smiling season, and under more auspicious circumstances.

I assure you our little village is quite another affair when she has on her summer attire, and is dressed to see company. When we can hie about, we have many little rural excursions and amusements, and we have very pleasant little cozy minglings of our social circle. We have not many lions, it is true; but such as we have, I am very confident will be happy to roar for your amusement. We shall always have a snug room for your especial accommodation, and shall be delighted to do the honors of Sea-spray to the future Mrs. D——”

Mrs. Godrick paused, for she had talked herself out of breath. “Our village” being a subject on which, in her glowing admiration of its beauties, she was particularly enthusiastic.

“I shall certainly come to the village again. I have made my first acquaintance with it under circumstances not easily forgotten. I am a worthless, unclaimed waif on the waters of life, and shall be likely to drift this way with the great tide of next summer idlers.”

De Koven looked a little sad, and Mrs. Godrick replied to the look, as well as the words:

“Never you fret about that. Some pretty wrecker will pick you up, in due time, worthless waif though you call yourself.”

“If she claims salvage on an article not worth advertising, how do you proceed, Hardy?”

“In that case, I suppose I should leave it with the finder, or take possession for the benefit of the State.”

“Take possession, then, in Heaven’s name, Hardy. I am willing to ‘do the State some service;’ but don’t see the satchel-strings tightened over my head, leaving me a helpless captive with the knitting-work, to whoever chances to find me, a lost castaway, in the foam.”

‘As you say; but let us wait till we see into whose hands you fall. The captivity may not be so disagreeable, after all,’ said Hardy, industriously pursuing his breakfast.

“I think, Mrs. Godrick,” said Lundy, “I shall return at the end of a few years, at any rate, when that fair wrecker in skirts has bagged the Captain, and find a snug anchorage among you. I begin to feel, sometimes, a little tired of cruising about this world, without any reliable holding-ground, and my anchor, when I cast it, continually coming home. I find, when I examine the log of the past, that it is time I payed out more cable, and dropped anchor without much splash, with a good lee, under which to set up a look-out from this world, and calculate my bearings for another and better.”

“Let me build you a pleasant cabin, Lundy, but don’t wait to take possession before you begin to calculate your bearings for that ‘better country, even an heavenly one.’ If you have a true compass, it matters little from what thumb you take your observation, the needle will always point right. Though the north star be clouded, Lundy, it is always in the right place; and though the eye may be dim that seeks it, and though the needle of faith may be sometimes submerged when our cause is darkest, the Star of Bethlehem is always in the ascendant.”

Hardy rose as he spoke, and the conversation and the breakfast came, at the same time, to a conclusion.

“Now for business and the Beach. Which way do you go, Hardy?”

“Across the lots. It’s my shortest course, and I am in some haste. I have bills to settle, and laborers to pay off; and I wish to board the schooner, for there’s a heavy amount there to be looked into. But these business details

with the men will be tedious, and you have no occasion to hurry yourself; the ship can't go till the next flood, and that is not in some hours."

"Very true. I shall take the street, for I wish to see Evelyn this morning, to arrange some papers referring to his own financial concerns. I find, Mrs. Godrick, that even in this unworldly, out-of-the-world place, the comforts of life must be 'bought with a price,' as my cigars have taught me, not always commensurate with the quality of the article."

"Not a bit of it, not a bit of it, Captain De Koven. We pay for every article we consume at the highest possible rate for the poorest possible commodity. And in the matter of cigars, when you come again you will do well to take warning, and bring your 'Havanas' with you. Most gentlemen do that."

"I will bear your suggestion in mind, Mrs. Godrick. It is due to your olfactories to do so, for I am sure they must have been grievously offended by the fumes of my villainous tubes. Which way, Lundy?"

"I follow in the wake of the wreck-master. I like his way of crossing the fields and skirting the pond. There's pleasant exercise for the ingenuity in creeping through the hedges, and treading in the right places, hopping from bog to bog in the marshes. There's too little adventure in walking the old beaten paths and highways of villages."

So the three departed, each his chosen way, for the same destination. De Koven's call on Evelyn was a brief one. The arrangements pertaining to business were simple, and soon made, relating merely to the best method of communicating with his financial agent, and of transmitting funds for his use to Sea-spray.

Little was said, for all were sad. So many incidents of their life were associated with the dearly loved friend about to leave them ; so much of the past seemed to live again in the familiar face so mingled in their thoughts with the recollections of its history ; so much that was pleasant, with so much that was painful, rose up now, in the parting hour so vividly, that they had no words to waste on trivial topics, in which the feeling then excited had no interest. So they parted with few words. Ada's tears flowed silently, and the parting pressure was given with a trembling grasp. A hasty word to Ernest and Allen, who were busy with their amusements in the little play-room, and De Koven was gone. He found Hardy and Lundy on the Beach, occupied with sundry little duties, and a crowd of lookers on, awaiting the final effort of the schooner to dislodge the huge hull of the "Orphan."

De Koven had been so much on the Beach, that faces and names were familiar, and he had strong feelings of gratitude for much personal kindness and professional sympathy with which he had been greeted during his involuntary stay among them. Many of them being seamen and shipmasters, they could appreciate the feelings of one who, owing his ship and his calling, as all true sailors do, had been cast upon their shore in a manner always, and under any circumstances, mortifying to the professional pride of a thorough-bred seaman.

De Koven had watched, with a practised and critical eye, the skilful and courageous manner in which these noble-minded men had put forth their energies, and risked limb and life to rescue those who had committed themselves to his keeping, when skill, and resolute bravery, and undoubted seamanship, had alike failed ; and in proportion to

the anxiety and deep sense of responsibility which tortured him in his helplessness, was the weight of grateful obligation which pressed on him now. They were men to whom a hint of pecuniary remuneration would have been a stinging indignity, and by whom any form of substantial acknowledgment would have been spurned with contempt. They did not value the hollow verbosity of spoken thanks. They had no studied language with which to meet complimentary and flattering eulogies, which, if offered, they despised, but they did value, because they felt its sincerity, the gratitude and unqualified esteem which looked out from De Koven's moistened eye, and spoke in the cordial grasp with which he always wrung their extended hands.

At home, as they all were, in all matters belonging to the sea, there was always pleasure in their intelligent discourse; beyond this, there was a never-failing fund of talk, full of deep interest to him, in subjects where his own experience failed, in the perils, privations and excitement of the life they had followed, amid the frozen wastes and eternal snows, and voiceless solitudes of the solemn Arctic seas.

To these tales of hardy endurance and daring encounters in the whale-fishery, De Koven had loved to listen; for they were the simple, unvarnished details of the personal adventures, and doings and darings, of men of unquestioned truth and untarnished integrity of character; and though his own simple, plain-sailing sea-life showed small in comparison, and though he listened in respectful silence to conversation in which he could hold but an interrogative companionship, he always felt that he derived not only passing amusement, but also much useful and profitable information, from these pleasant, lounging interviews in the hut

or between the sand-banks, on those sunny winter mornings, on the ocean shore of Sea-spray.

"I am going on board the schooner, Captain De Koven. Don't wait for me if I am not back in reasonable time for dinner, for I may be detained longer than I intend."

"I advise you to be expeditious, Hardy, for the clouds look like a south-easter in contemplation, and with the wind from that quarter, there'll be a fine swell on at flood. I don't believe we shall see your tracks in the sand again to-day, if you are long in coming ashore."

"Much obliged to you, Hull, but I am not ready to go off yet. Here, you Bob, just jump into your wagon and drive up to my house, and tell them to send me the biggest ham from the store-room, and go to Frankey's and get twelve dozen eggs. Put on the string, Bob, and be back in no time, for I'm in a blamed hurry."

"He'll have to be quick, if you get aboard and back again. or this 'old pup' has lost his scent of the weather," interposed Hull.

"Well, I can't help that; they've nothing to eat on board that craft, and there's no coasting Long Island without grub. If I can't get ashore I can stand on with the schooner, and take the sails back, and no harm done."

"Is it necessary to go on board at all, Hardy?" asked De Koven, who, considering Hardy a landsman, feared that an unpremeditated sea voyage in rough weather might not be very pleasant.

"Yes, if it is ever necessary to attend to one's especial duties. It is my duty to settle some matters of business, and to see to their personal comforts on board that schooner, before she sails, if it costs me a trip to the city. So here comes Bob, with the eatables. Have you got the ham?"

"You'd think so, I guess, if you'd backed the 'tarnal great thing down two flight of stairs," replied Bob, as he shrugged his head and shoulders.

"And the eggs?"

"To be sure I have got the eggs, real shanghais, six to the pound. Got 'em, indeed!—did you ever hear of Franky's failing to have a thing when it was most wanted? Cash article, too?"

"I say, Commodore, hold on a minute," said Hull, calling after Hardy as he was hurrying to the boat. "If you go on board you'll see spires before you see Sea-spray again—keep pretty close, or Barnum will have you caged."

"Don't you worry, Hull, I'll be fair with you, and tell him honestly, if he wants the Sea-spray jack-knife, he'll find it in your pocket." So saying, Hardy stepped into the boat which was waiting his bidding, and was rowed to the schooner.

The final effort was now put forth, and with a fresh south-east wind, and the tide at the top of the flood, to add impetus to the force skilfully brought to bear upon her, the ship swung heavily round, and again floated free on the wave. Cheer after cheer rang long and loud over the sea at this prosperous result. Congratulations and "God speeds" followed her as she floated away in the wake of her lighter-moulded companion; and friendly hands were extended to meet the grasp of De Koven, with honest and true-hearted joy in his joy.

But the wind gradually increased to a roaring gale, and communication with the shore was out of the question. All business at the Beach was at an end, the crowd dispersed to their homes, and Lundy and De Koven once more took their way to their pleasant quarters at Hardy's,

regretting sincerely the constrained absence of their frank and agreeable host.

"I am sorry, Mrs. Godrick, that we are not to have Captain Hardy's company to dinner this evening; but he had business with the schooner, and has taken passage with her to the city."

Mrs. Godrick paled a little at De Koven's words, for she had a mother's affection for her brother, and had watched with the authority which her many years' seniority gave her, and with the tenderness of true sisterly love, over the infancy, boyhood, and youth of the motherless boy; and it was the correct principles she so carefully instilled, and the nice training she so patiently carried out, which had, in a great measure, made his manhood what it was. Mrs. Godrick was a fine specimen of the old-school Sea-spray lady. Intellectually above the cast of her acquaintances generally, she had given much of her leisure time to reading, somewhat indiscriminately, perhaps, but under the guidance of a taste, if not fastidious, delicate and generally correct, and had a fund of all sorts of light literature, upon which she could always draw for something apropos to the subjects under discussion. Scrupulous in her punctilious observance of all the proprieties and courtesies of social and neighborhood intercourse, and never forgetful of the nice and nun-like delicacy which shrouds the character of a true woman, she was, nevertheless, a sprightly and amusing companion, with a strong, self-relying, masculine, independent tone of thought and speech, which was not without its charm.

The evening had set in dark and tempestuous, and it was not without something of a shadow on her usually bright and cheerful face, that Mrs. Godrick took her seat and pre-

pared to do the honors of the table, in the absence of her brother. The wind roared round the corners of the house in angry gusts, and occasionally swept over the chimney, with a deep howl, and a peal like thunder.

Mrs. Godrick set down her cup, its contents untasted, and drew a long breath, with an inquiring glance at De Koven.

"A fresh breeze, Mrs. Godrick, nothing more, take the word of a sailor who would not deceive you. It's a noisy braggart about buildings and over chimney-tops, but just the fellow to make do our bidding, under proper restrictions, on the sea. You need not distress yourself in the least. It is rough, I admit, but it is not cold, nor in any way unmanageable. They are at home along the Island coast, and know every inch of the way, and every bend of the shore, as well as you know the way to your pantry, or the steps to your cellar. Believe me, you may be easy. What say you, Lundy?"

"Just what you say, with this qualification, there's quite enough of it to make me willing it would not increase. A very little more would be too much for comfort, if not for safety. If I were on board, I should not think of feeling alarmed, but I might begin to debate the propriety of cutting adrift the craft she had in tow."

"Nonsense, Lundy, you are a croaker," said De Koven, noticing, with regret and commiseration, the increasing paleness which Lundy's straightforward truthfulness had called over the features of their anxious hostess.

The meal was gone through with in comparative silence, and, though the little work-stand was placed in its own peculiar corner, the patchwork was suffered to lie unrolled in the basket, and the candles were placed on the mantel.

Mrs. Godrick swung herself slowly back and forth in her low sewing-chair, anxiously listening to the wind, and tapping her feet impatiently on the floor, in her nervous and restless excitement. Greatly to the relief of De Koven, a step sounded on the gravel-walk in the yard, and Hull made his bow in the door-way.

"Just what I expected—no patchwork out, and Mrs. Godrick in the fidgets. There's no occasion at all to be alarmed. Just a good spanking breeze ; a capful too much for fresh-water sailors, perhaps, but nothing to look glum about. Come, come, put the candles on the stand, and loose out the coverlet. The worst consequences of the blow will be the loss of an evening's headway on that endless piece of circumnavigation."

Hull's well-meant nonsense had the desired effect. The lights were transferred to the table, the quilt was unfolded, and Mrs. Godrick was soon absorbed in the mysteries of corner-pieces and center-pieces, long blocks and short blocks, triangular, and quadrangular, and octangular fragments of calico, connected artistically with polygons of white, making in its whole a perfect labyrinth of seams, as untraceable by the uninitiated as Robin Hood's race.

Meanwhile conversation flowed pleasantly on with the three seamen, and Mrs. Godrick almost forgot her anxiety in her interest. The evening glided away more cheerfully than its commencement promised, and Hull took his leave at the orthodox hour of nine, all time after that being considered, in sober, staid Sea-spray, unmistakable dissipation.

The mince-pie and cheese having been duly done honor to, the household separated for the night, in anticipation of extra early rising on the morrow, in order to reach the

railroad in season for the train for New-York. The storm spent its violence during the night, and the sun rose clear on a calm, soft morning. Mrs. Godrick's delicious breakfast was duly dispatched, and, after many interchanges of cordial and kind wishes for each other's happiness, De Koven and Lundy bade adieu to Hardy's hospitable mansion, and Sea-spray was soon left behind.

CHAPTER X.

THE few days which intervened between the departure of De Koven and the festival of Christmas were bright and cold. Evelyn devoted his time entirely to the care of Ada and Ernest ; studying, by every attention, to soothe, cheer and amuse them. With Ernest the task was not a difficult one, for his gentle, affectionate nature, met with grateful appreciation every act and effort put forth in his behalf ; and the light brightened in his mild eyes, and the glow of returning health deepened on his fair cheek, while the buoyancy natural to his years burst sometimes joyously over his lips. It was an unwonted sound, and it came like gladdening music to his father's heart. The hours which Allen spent in school were devoted by Evelyn to the instruction of his son, in those studies appropriate to his years—a course which he had always pursued with him—preferring his own system of home education, to the too general practice of sending forth young and pure-minded boys to meet the contaminating influences of public and not very select schools. Ernest was an apt scholar, and proficient in all the studies he had yet attempted. Fond of reading, and with a well-directed taste, he had mental acquirements beyond those usually attained at his age ; and always an eager and attentive listener when his father read aloud his

favorite authors, he had acquired a knowledge of language, and a fund of general literary information, which, buried deep in his quiet little heart, was his, though unrevealed. With the soft simplicity of a more than ordinarily child-like disposition and manner, he had the deep reflections and mature strength of thought, which sometimes struck as painfully unnatural upon his hearers, when he gravely and innocently gave them utterance. Evelyn was aware of this peculiarity, which was often strikingly apparent, and he hailed with delight every manifestation of pleasure in the usual sports and amusements of boyhood, almost wishing, at times, to discover some approach to roguishness or mischief in his glee.

Since the explanatory conversation between Ada and her husband, she had been less absorbed with her own emotions and thoughts, less absent and inattentive, and had made a strenuous effort to be cheerful and at ease—manifesting an affectionate and acquiescing interest in all Evelyn's plans, and propositions for occupation and amusement, assisting Ernest in his lessons, reading to him when he was weary, telling him interesting stories, watching his out-of-door sports with Allen with amused interest, and rejoicing with Evelyn over his amending health.

To the family with whom she was domesticated, Ada was an interesting and pleasant companion, entering with ease and familiarity into conversation on all subjects of interest, which formed the prevailing topics of the day, and asking many questions with regard to the character, customs, and peculiarities of the people, among whom it was their present determination to make for themselves a pleasant and permanent home. Never gay—never light and laughter-loving—but gentle, mournful, thoughtful and sub-

dued in her whole tone and manner, she often sought the society of the family in their private apartments, and looked on with curious attention while they were busied in the discharge of various domestic duties.

To her Dury was a study. Unaccustomed to the peculiar and melancholy tones of voice, to the uniform, steady and quiet movement with which Dury went on in her undeviating course, she liked to sit quietly in the cook's undisputed territory, the kitchen, and hold with her such talk as she could elicit from her slow and taciturn nature; while to Dury the soft, sweet voice, and sad, pale face of the gentle stranger, had a strange and winning charm. Ada liked to talk with her of her home, of the green hills, and the fertile fields of solemn, solitary old Montauk—for Dury was a lineal descendant of a race of kings, her father having been the last acknowledged chief of the royal name of Pharo. The tribe had sunk under the encroachments of rapacious civilization, aided by the exterminating and degrading eagerness with which the degenerate children of a slain and trampled people had succumbed to the fiend of intemperance.

All pretensions to chieftainship or kingly dignity had long since been abandoned. The family last claiming precedence, now nearly extinct, had forsaken the home of their fathers; and the few remaining "rights" still claimed by the tribe, vested in the oldest full-blooded Indian, without regard to descent or family—seniority, without taint of amalgamation, being the test of succession.

Poor Dury had little national pride, but she remembered the palmy days when her father was king—when the tribe was numerous, and their rights much more extensive and undisputed; and she felt the *family* if not the *national* de-

gradation. So she would sit in her chosen seat, under the oven, and weave long legends of the days she remembered, and of those dim and shadowy periods, far away in the glorious past, of which she had heard many and marvelous traditions from the long since passed away patriarchs and prophetesses of her people. Her soft, low voice, in its monotonous and musical mournfulness, had a soothing and tranquilizing power over Ada; and a long, social visit to Dury, in the glimmering twilight, within the deep jambs of the great kitchen fire-place, became one of her especial enjoyments. With her little cushioned seat carefully adjusted in the corner opposite to Dury's, into which, by common consent, no one ever intruded, while Dury roasted her coffee, or beat her breakfast cakes, or pared her apples, would Ada sit, and indulge, if such was her mood, in long, undisturbed reveries, or draw out, from the hidden treasures of Dury's untutored mind, much curious matter for thought—for Dury's thoughts were her own. Books were to her sealed fountains of knowledge, from which she could not drink; consequently her imaginings flowed in channels purely original, cutting their own way, without being confused by meeting and mingling streams, and without being exercised and agitated by the conflicting opinions and doctrines of schools and systems, of which she had never heard. Dury had a philosophy of her own, which always stood her instead, and a faith of her own, with which speculative disquisitions had never meddled. She believed devoutly what she did believe. She believed that if she dropped her dish-cloth a stranger would visit the domicile. She believed, if the lord of the barn-yard harem gave voice to a swaggering crow on the door-step, that a troop of company would inevitably follow; and she had a trembling and horrified

faith in an impending death in the house, near which was heard the cry of the mourning dove ; and many have been the precipitately improvised bakings consequent upon a chance challenge from the strutting champion of "Biddy's rights;" and many the unaccountable manifestations of solemn tenderness she has bestowed upon her friends, in her perplexed dubiety as to who was the object designated by the wailing omen of the dove.

Of religious enlightenment Dury was innocent, so far as instruction in any established creed or form of worship was concerned ; but she had unshaken faith, without any enlightened belief, in a creating and superintending Providence, in future punishment of sin, and rewarding of humble well-doing. And, though her faith did not always produce corresponding practice, she nevertheless had faith enough to fear the wrath, and to love the beneficent attributes, of her Maker ; and she said her prayers after her own simple fashion, or she could not have hoped to sleep unmolested by actual and corporeal visitations of the presence of Cheepi.

To Ernest and Allen, Dury's ministrations were particularly available in the matters of roasting apples, and boiling and drawing of molasses candy—in both of which she was an acknowledged proficient ; and they would enter into a compact with her for an interchange of services, she silently superintending the boiling of the swelling and troublesome treacle, while they alternately discharged the duty compounded for, of reading aloud such books as suited her taste and reached her capacity—"Peter Wilkins" and his winged wife being the prime favorite—always listened to with breathless, but never incredulous wonder.

The frying of doughnuts, too, was one of the kitchen festivals, over which Dury was the presiding divinity, and in

the bustling solemnities of which Allen and Ernest were particularly zealous to assist, holding candle and platter while Dury gave the kettle a practised professional shake, or skimmed out the soft, spongy brown balls, with a pleased spreading of features, at times almost a smile, meeting in return many mouldings of caricatured men, with bloated limbs, and squat bodies, and swollen knobs of heads, with all sorts of phrenological developments, which they had great glee in dissecting. So the days and the evenings sped pleasantly away, and the morrow was Christmas.

Evelyn was writing in his room. The Colonel had gone to the post-office. Allen and Ernest were holding much private consultation with Dury, in her department, concerning sundry forthcoming packages, to be mysteriously conveyed through her agency to their playmates in the neighborhood; and Ada was in the little family sitting-room, with Alice and Leena, dreamy, and drooping, and sad. When unrestrained by the presence of her husband, Ada dwelt often, and with much emotion, upon her early associations and her childhood's home—subjects in his hearing never touched—speaking with choking agitation of the quiet little church in one of the remote rural districts of England, in which she had been presented for the holy sacrament of baptism; where, in the freshness of her joyous girlish childhood, she had come forward for the solemn rite of confirmation, ratifying and acknowledging, in the presence of God, the holy vows that were now her own; and where, with deep and reverential awe in her heart, she first knelt at the holy table, and received from her father's hand the blessed symbols of her Saviour's dying and redeeming love. She spoke of the pleasant Rectory, with its embowering trees; the fair and fertile glebe, with its cultured

fields, its shady sylvan walks, its sunny hills, and its sparkling little streams glistening and gliding noiselessly between them. Of places and things she would speak, as if with feelings of loving and lingering interest; of persons or people, if ever, hastily and evasively, explaining her avoidance of all allusion to early friends and attachments in Evelyn's presence, by remarking to him that it was galling to him to hear it, and that he always felt, if she dwelt much upon old associations, that she was not happy with him, but was pining for home and home-born and regretted enjoyments.

"It would hardly seem," said Alice, in reply to Ada's remarks—"it would hardly seem that such an idea would give him pain, he is so fondly indulgent, his means so unrestricted, and communication between the countries, at the present day, attended with so few inconveniences or annoyances. The feeling is so natural, that not to have it would seem heartlessly unnatural; and I am sure he would be more than willing to gratify it. Why don't you return, or, at least, visit your former home?"

"God forbid it! Never!—never!" exclaimed Ada, lifting her hands, as if to ward off some terrible thought; then, more calmly continuing: "It would kill me. Another incumbent holds my father's living; other faces gather round my father's hearth; other hearts beat happily now, over which I should bring but an unwelcome shadow, and the Rectory can never more be my home. Not for worlds would I visit it. Besides, I have an unconquerable horror of crossing the sea."

Ada rose, and taking the papers which had been brought in by the evening's mail, retired to her own room.

"There is something I can't fathom about that woman," said Alice, musingly, after Ada had left.

"Then she must be deep," replied Leena, giving the fire an enlivening punch, "for I always thought you had a keen eye for looking through millstones; but I can't see so great a difference between coasting the continent of North America and crossing the Atlantic. I should think the choice was in favor of crossing, in a well-appointed steamer, rather than coasting from port to port along the Atlantic board, in an ordinary sailing trader."

"I don't understand her, she is so variable and inconsistent in her moods—so mild and apparently unresisting,—and at the same time, if her own feelings are touched, or crossed, so imperious, and so bitterly stinging in her uncalled-for retorts. She calls forth my pity sometimes, but there is that about her which repels my love."

There was, indeed, that about Ada calculated to chill all fond and gentle attachments, and deeply and sorely did Evelyn feel it. The grief which had opened and softened his heart towards every sentient living thing, seemed to have had a directly opposite effect upon hers. There was an asperity of tone and an irascibility of temper, evidently increasing, embittering much of the peace of their fireside intercourse—a sort of morbid feeling, that everything pleasant and joyous was mockery of her sorrow, and that every caress or indulgence bestowed upon Ernest, was defrauding Edith in her grave of her meed of tributary tears. It was vain to combat her impatient querulousness with soothing or argument; and from the subduing and consoling influences of religion, which, in its peace-giving and purifying blessedness, Evelyn often sought to present to her consideration, she obstinately turned away her eyes. Shutting up her heart in cold repulsiveness from his sympathy, shrinking with shuddering aversion from

his affectionate caress, yet loving him, it would seem, with a deep and idolatrous love, and deprecating and dreading his displeasure with vehement and touching appeal, she was a riddle in her contradictions, which the anxious and aching heart of her husband sought painfully but fruitlessly to solve.

But it was Christmas Eve. Ernest and Allen, with Dury's consent and co-operation, had rolled in the immense Yule log, which now, thoroughly ignited, was sending its cheerful glow over the capacious jambs, and up the great cavernous throat of the old kitchen chimney. The table was drawn forward in the light of the pleasant blaze, and the various amusements which were to enliven the evening were under discussion, when a thundering knock, which made the house ring, heralded the entrance of a huge Christmas-box, not unworthy such a noisy precursor. Captain Hardy had arrived in the evening boat, bearing letters and remittances to Evelyn, and the liberal token of remembrance and Christmas cheer to the boys, from De Koven. Allen's hammer and chisel were speedily in requisition, and eager little heads bent in delighted impatience over the box, from which Dury's stout hands had removed the cover. It had been filled by no niggard hand, from the resources of a market in which money is the Aladdin's lamp, producing all that the imagination can ask, almost before the desire is uttered. Great was the glee in unpacking; and often, during the process, were blessings invoked on the head of the generous donor, while all the household were summoned with noisy acclamations, to witness and share in the joy and its occasion:—toys, books, fruits, confections, and the never-failing knicker-

bockers, without which, in Gotham, Christmas would hardly be Christmas.

But joy is not joy, if it has not sharers—at least so felt Ernest and Allen; and a host of smiling, happy little faces were soon gathered on short summons round the table, loaded with its tempting stores for food and frolic.

Leaving Dury to keep order, the older members of the household retired to their own pursuits—Evelyn to his papers and letters, and Ada to the perusal of a work of fiction, in which it was now her whim to be deeply absorbed, partly perhaps because it served as a pretext for unsocial silence, and partly because it purported to involve high and important principles for the consideration of reforming philanthropists, who, in their meddling and mischievous zeal, are not unlike the venerable old lady celebrated in the anecdotal annals of Sea-spray, who, having no fire of her own to attend to, was always dropping her pudding into other people's pots, slyly slipping in when her neighbor was busy with her own proper business, causing many a sputtering overboil, and quenching many a brisk little blaze with untold waste of "skimings."

"Oh, father, father, do come down—mother do come and let me tell your fortunes; do come and see what a beautiful little "Fairy" Clarence has sent us, and how nice she tells fortunes. Come, we've all had our fortunes told, and they are so funny."

Ernest had no need to plead so earnestly; for Evelyn, to whom a glad look on the face of his child was worth all the news of a dozen arrivals, had put aside his paper, and stood ready to accompany him to consult his oracle. Ada also, though not so cheerfully, obeyed his summons. With

a peevish "what nonsense is on the carpet now?" she laid down her book in the midst of a scene full of horrors heavily laid on, and followed to the kitchen. Peals of laughter rung out clear, fresh from the happy hearts of the group of rosy children gathered round the whirling Sibyl, who, with her slender ivory wand, pointed to the figures on the circular dial, stopping at the number designating the card on which was recorded the answer of the oracle to the person consulting her. Evelyn looked on, pleased in the pleasure he witnessed, and amused with the play so amusing to the eager little participants, who, with hands full of candy and eyes full of mirth, watched the cards as they were pointed out for their mates, and laughed, let them say what they would.

"Now, papa," said Ernest, "I will try my fortune, and you shall read it." So Ernest gave the dial a whirl, and Evelyn read the response, thus :

Go forth, with bold, brave heart to meet
Whate'er the future brings ;
Nor dread the shadowy shapes that sleep
Beneath Fate's folded wings.

Go forth, resisting ruthless wrong,
In conscious duty's might,
In thine own steadfast purpose strong,
To battle for the right.

Go forth, with high and holy aim,
Before thine earnest eye,
Prepared, if Truth thine efforts claim,
To dare, endure, and die.

"That's a good fortune, papa, ain't it?" said Ernest, as his father finished.

"Certainly, my son, certainly, if followed out as I hope

and trust it will be. Do you think you can do all that it enjoins?"

"Not in my own strength, papa; you have taught me better than to think that; but I can try, and with God's blessing I can do."

Evelyn laid his hand on the head of his boy without a word, and Allen took his turn, Evelyn reading the answer for him, as for Ernest.

Nay, ask not what thy fate shall be,
Thou shapest thine own destiny,
If o'er thy spirit, purpose high
And proud resolve hold mastery;

If, scorning shame, and spurning sin,
Then shinest truth thy soul within,
Nor ban nor blight shall come to thee,
To darken thy futurity.

Nor poverty thy footsteps haunt,
That meagre spectre, grim and gaunt;
But plenty shall thy path attend,
And peace above thy pillow bend.

"There, Allen," said Ernest, "you have had a better fortune than I have, for you are promised all sorts of pleasant things, while I have only to do, and dare, and die."

"Not so, Ernest," said Evelyn. "You are only bid to dare all things, even death, in a true and righteous cause—in other words, never to shrink from duty. You would not think that a good fortune which could tempt you to do that, would you, my boy?"

"Now, papa, you shall try what Fairy will tell you. Oh, I do hope you will get something good. Come, now, give t a whirl."

Evelyn did so, and Ernest read—

Speak not an angry word,
Let not your heart be stirred
 To fire-side strife ;
But work, with patient zeal,
For home, and household weal.
Buy, borrow, beg or steal,
 Risk limb or life,
Encounter aches and ills,
Dare fevers, laugh at chills,
Take salts or Brandreth's pills,
 War to the knife
'Gainst fretfulness and care,
But never, never dare,
With bitter, taunting air,
Speak words you well might spare,
Cold, caustic, and unfair,
 To wound your wife.

Evelyn laughed at the unneeded warning of the Sybil, while Ernest insisted that it was very bad, for he said he knew "his papa would never steal; and, if nobody ever spoke unkind words to mother till he did, she would never be wounded."

"Come, mother, now you are the next, and then dear, good, patient Dury shall have the best fortune in the lot."

Ada objected to making an exhibition of herself; but at length came forward, and gave the little dial an impatient whirl, and Ernest read, greatly to his exultation, the card she drew :

Matron modest, meek and fair,
Light shall fall the feet of care
On thy pure, pale, placid brow,
Serene in soft, sweet beauty now.
Softly, on each shining tress,
Time's transforming hand shall press,

Gliding o'er, with scarce a trace,
Touching, but with soft'ning grace.
Lovelier than in rosy youth,
In thy calm, unquestioned truth,
He, whose home thy virtues bless,
Surely ne'er can love thee less.

"Scarcely more," said Evelyn, turning with an affectionate look towards Ada, who walked disdainfully away, while Ernest and Allen coaxed Dury to try her fortune. Dury exclaiming, as she came reluctantly out from her seat on the stairs, the blazing yule-log having compelled her to vacate her favorite position—

"Whu ; oh, guh ! old squaw's fortune come long ago. No house, no home, no houzen stuff, no Ingin, no nothin'." But Dury put her hand to the dial, and Allen read :

Good Dury, fate sends you all sorts of good wishes,
Rich, racy and rare, like your own savory dishes ;
Your bread shall be whitest, your biscuits the best,
Your sponge-cake the lightest that cook ever blessed ;
No witches shall ever play pranks in your churn,
Nor the cakes on your griddle, stick, blacken or burn ;
Your dips shall burn steady, no thief in the wick,
And the soap in your kettles come ropy and quick ;
Good luck shall attend when you bake, boil or stew,
And success crown your efforts, whatever you do.

Dury almost laughed at her promised good fortune, her greatest emotions of merriment being demonstrated by spasmodic tossings and throwings of her head, resembling the efforts of an indignant cow endeavoring to rid her horns of a husk. The boys continued to amuse themselves, and Ernest came playfully round to his mother, with his thin, slender arm thrown lovingly over her shoulder, whispering,

"Did not I read you a good fortune, mother ? growing better and more beautiful as you get to be a little old lady."

"Don't bore me with any more of your insufferable nonsense, but go and play the fool with your noisy mates."

Why did the shadow darken on Ada's brow, and the color fade from her cheek and lip, as she turned and took her way to her own room? The arrow had sped home. The shadow was on the loving heart of the gentle boy, and his lip quivered as he met the glance of his father turned upon him.

"Ernest," said Allen, kindly, for he had learned to read his countenance, and had heard the stinging rebuke which had wounded him. "Ernest, I see you are tired with our noise; we will be more quiet, and I will put up all the things nice and safe. Sit down and rest."

"I am not tired of play, but my head aches," replied Ernest, putting his hand on his heart instead of his head.

"Oh, papa," said he, bursting into tears, as Evelyn put his arm around him. "Oh, papa, I was taking so much comfort; and before all the boys, too. It was cruel, for I thought mother was pleased, like the rest of us."

"Never mind, my son," whispered Evelyn; "never mind. We must be patient, and not let such things distress us. Poor mother is nervous, and we must remember she was not always so irritable. It was cruel, Ernest—I felt it so; but we must take it coolly. When she is in better health, she will be again her better self. Don't play too long, boys, and tire yourselves out to-night, for you have a great play day before you to-morrow. Merry Christmas, and full stockings, to you all."

So Evelyn bade them good-night, and left them to their sports.

CHAPTER XI.

WHEN Evelyn returned to his apartment, he found Ada bending over her book, with traces of recent tears on her cheeks. Were they for the sorrow she read of, or the sorrow she had caused? He sat pondering the question, but without the power to solve it, when Ada looked suddenly up, and met that inquisitive and steady gaze. A flush of anger, or it might be of shame, mounted to her brow, as she threw down her book and stood up confronting him.

"Speak, Walter Evelyn; what would you read, that you bend your stern brow on me with such searching severity? Speak your reproaches! Tell me I am heartless and cruel. I read displeasure in your face, whatever you may read in your study of mine. I own it—I am cruel. I feel it. I have incurred your displeasure. I deserve it. Speak; say so. I have no wish to disarm you. I am guilty, guilty," pursued she, with flashing eyes and unceasing vehemence. "But you cannot look into my heart; if you could, would you believe the record there written? Say, Walter, would you believe it?"

"I trust I should find nothing so terribly incredible, Ada; but I see no cause for this outbreak of passion. You have been reading too steadily that exciting picture of horrors which never had existence. You are fatigued

and peevish. Put your book away, and clear your brow of that unbecoming shadow."

Ada put away her book, set aside the little table at which she had been reading, and sitting down on a low bench at Evelyn's feet, looked beseechingly up in his face, while tears stood brimming in her beautiful eyes.

"Dear, kind, patient Walter, how can you be so gentle and so forbearing with me, when I am so continually provoking and annoying you?"

"Not provoking, Ada; the sting is deeper than that. You do pain and grieve me, but there is no resentment in the surprised and wounded feeling with which I sometimes look upon your varying and unaccountable humors. Not for myself, Ada, do I feel this most painfully; but for my child I shall feel compelled to require and command different treatment. How could you, Ada, his mother, throw back his childlike endearments so cruelly upon his heart, darkening the glow on his sweet young brow, and poisoning his pure and innocent enjoyments? How could you do it, Ada?"

Evelyn's voice trembled in his earnestness, for he loved with all the strength of his early love the fair and capricious being before him, and it was a trying task to rebuke and lecture her with those moist, mild eyes now bent so lovingly upon him. But he knew it was right to set before her the wrong she was inflicting on her unoffending child; and as she made no reply, he went on:

"I was thinking, as I looked on you, so absorbed over that book, grand and unequaled I admit it to be in its powerful and painful delineations—I was thinking how strange that you could expend so much feeling upon objects so far removed from your sphere of influence. Is it not a sad

waste of sympathy—is it not a strange, unprofitable outlay of emotion—a mistaken, if not wicked turning away from their natural and proper channels, the sweet affections of your nature, giving your tears and your kindly commiseration to the sufferings of an unknown race, terrible and torturing though they may be, while your own gentle and loving child, the only being on this wide earth whose heart's blood wells up from the same fountain with yours, sits wounded and heart-sore beside you? Ada, Ada, it grieves me to speak in such strong language as this—it grieves me beyond my power to express, to say one word to pain you. But you will think of it, Ada, my sweet wife; you will think, and not resentfully, of this?"

"I do think. I have thought, Walter, till thought maddens me. I grieve when I feel that I have wounded Ernest. I grieve bitterly, bitterly, when I know that I have offended you. But oh, Walter, my noble, kind-hearted husband, if you knew how I struggle and strive to strangle the hissing serpent within me—if you knew how my heart sends up its agonizing, unavailing prayer for peace, when there is no peace, you would bear with me, not more patiently and kindly than you do, that were needless, but you would bear with my perverseness still, without seeking to fathom its cause. You cannot know, Walter, what sad associations a word of playful fondness may have power to awaken. You cannot know what pangs of bitter remembrance a well-meant kindness, or a look of beaming and truthful affection sends thrilling through my heart. You cannot know, you never will know, the deep, deep love, sinful in its idolatrous madness, with which my heart clings to you, shrining you high above all other conceivable good, and giving to you that

place in my wicked, idol-worshiping heart, which should belong to my God."

"Oh hush, Ada—hush. Such confessions are due, not to me—they should be breathed but to your God. To him you must look for relief in this weary warfare with self and its subtle temptations. I know very well that your feelings have been severely tried, and that your system is enervated and unstrung; you need rest from excited feelings. But how are you to have it if you cannot restrain or regulate your emotions? If a chance word carelessly spoken, excites so much useless expenditure of passion, where are you to look for relief? You must seek it in prayer, Ada, in frequent, and fervent, and self-subduing communings with God."

He took her clasped hands in his, and lifting them up, the cry which his heart sent up was known unto Him to whom he addressed it, but his lips uttered no sound.

The Christmas Eve sports were ended. The boys went home with a joyous shout, and Allen and Ernest, after carefully packing away their bright treasures, retired, as Allen said, "fairly fagged out with fun."

"Ernest, dear, darling Ernest," said Ada, calling him to her side and clasping her arms around him—"Ernest, my only child, my words have wounded you—forgive me for our dead Edith's sake—forgive me, my own gentle boy. I know that I was cruel. I am sorry, but I cannot say it shall not be so again, for I am weak and wayward; but Ernest dear, try not to mind it, or feel hurt when I am harsh and peevish, nor doubt your poor mother's love, even when her words belie it."

"Don't mind me, mother," said Ernest, stoutly, "you know my fortune is to dare and endure, so I will just begin to-night."

"And mine is to preserve a peaceable fireside at all risks. So go to bed at once, mother and son, and let me read my newspapers in undisputed possession of the warmest corner."

Evelyn spoke smilingly, and the shadow passed away from the guileless little heart. If it lingered longer and more heavily on the older ones, they shut it carefully from sight.

Evelyn knelt for their usual evening service, and if there was unwonted tremor in his voice, as he put up the petition—"Reform whatever is amiss in the temper and disposition of our souls," one, at least, of that little isolated family knew wherefore, and one heart sent up a deep and almost despairing response. But a calm and tranquilizing influence followed their solemn devotions, and, as Ada gave to her child her affectionate good-night kiss, her heart swelled with less painful emotions, and she sought her own pillow with a soothing sense of pardon and peace. Evelyn sat by the fire and mused; he had no desire for reading his papers, but he communed silently with his own heart. He lifted the bewildering and fearful fancies which had so wearied and worried him, away from its inner recesses; he bade its throbbing pulses lie still; he silenced his repining thoughts; and laying bare his heart to his own rigid and unflinching examination, he searched out its secret sins, and setting them singly before God, he pleaded silently and truthfully, and earnestly, for pardon for each and all; for grace and strength to meet and meekly endure what was yet in store for him; and peace and gentle joy stole over him, as he sat communing with himself and with his God, until every burden was lifted from his soul. Night deepened into midnight, the waning hours passed on, and still

that silent man sat listening to the voice within his heart sounding out still louder and clearer, until he almost fancied that he heard, with his outward ears, the glorious and gladdening angel's song, "Peace on earth, and good-will towards man." So the Christmas Eve passed away; and Walter Evelyn sought repose, his heart fanned by the wings of the Angel of Peace, and his sleep was sweet that bright Christmas morning.

The dense, dim clouds have rolled away,
Which hung their folds along the sky,
And one pale star, with lonely ray,
In dewy lustre opes its eye.

Sweet twilight star! whose trembling beams,
Fall pale on evening's blushing brow,
While every silent object seems
Communing with the spirit now.

Oh, how thy pure and placid light,
As soft o'er Ocean's wave it plays,
Revives, in glowing colors bright,
The scenes of earlier, happier days!

Oh, blissful days, for aye gone by,
Ye still to memory fondly cling,
And burning tears still dim my eye,
For friends in death now slumbering.

But brighter, purer, holier far,
Than all night's glittering arch, that gem,
Breaks on the spirit's gaze, thy star,
Oh, blissful, blessed Bethlehem!

For while they wake the blinding tear,
For fond affections crushed and riven,
Thou point'st to joys that faded here,
To brighten and mature in Heaven.

For they but prompt the pining sigh,
O'er human plans and passions crossed,
While thou proclaim'st, beyond the sky,
Re-union with the loved and lost !

Day broke in serene and cloudless beauty on the sea, that clear, bright Christmas morning. With its first dawning light, Evelyn arose, and, putting back the blinds, looked forth upon the silent earth, yet sleeping in the soft, shadowy gleam. The glittering beams of the brilliant morning star, holding its course alone in the cloudless south-east, fell on his view, as he lifted his gaze to the kindling heavens. Evelyn's heart was full of love and deep devotional joy, and he sent up almost a shout of glad thanksgiving, as he looked out upon the glowing splendors of this beautiful world, to Him who had fashioned and finished it. The hum of bustling, busy life, began to break the holy silence of the hour. Man was abroad, with his passions and purposes. Human strivings and stir jarred upon the sweet peacefulness of the silent handiworks of God ; and the spiritualizing charm which had, like a visible and consecrating presence, hung over the Temple of Nature, was lost.

Evelyn turned from the window. Silently he hung over the pillow of the slumbering boy. The soft, rosy light preceding the sun, looked in on the child, in his calm, unruffled repose. The silky brown curls were spread abroad on his pillow ; and the sweet cherub cheek rested on the little pale hand, so small and delicate in its fairy-like slenderness. It was too fair and pure a thing for earth. Evelyn felt it so, and a chill came over his heart as he traced the too striking resemblance to the gentle-hearted girl he had left to sleep in a far sunny land. Evelyn saw

too plainly that Ernest was not formed for long continuance here.

“ ‘To dare, endure, and die!’ Alas, my fair boy, you can do but one—daring and endurance are not for you. But let me not cloud this blessed morning with fears and forebodings. Let me not thanklessly embitter the present, with its cup of blessing, by anticipating sorrows in the future ;” and, turning from the couch, he went forth in the beams of the rising sun, to his accustomed walk to the grave of Edith, on which every day the yearning heart of the father poured out its blessings and its tears.

It was Christmas all over Christendom ; but little did Christian Sea-spray regard the blessed associations of the day. No solemn service in the little temple “dedicated” to the worship of God, set forth for their edification the glad tidings of a Saviour’s birth. No call from the “church-going bell” summoned them to the house of God, to bless and magnify His holy name, or to render thanks for his “inestimable love in the redemption of the world,” through His incarnate and crucified Son.

Innocent of those feelings of animosity towards everything which belonged to the rejected and forsworn Church of England, which actuated the early Puritans in their determined repudiation of all her time-honored observances, as subtle devices of the adversary, or as the “mysteries of iniquity,” instigated and perpetrated by the blasphemous many-headed “beast,” they nevertheless adhered to the rigid simplicity in their manner of worship which was the result of them. Without troubling themselves about the motives and influences which continued to drive those stern unrelenting seceders to their formal disruption from the faith and forms of their fathers, and to send them

voluntary, and, possibly, self-sacrificing exiles, forth from the homes of their fathers, they had retained the custom, without questioning the cause, of ignoring Christmas church services.

The church could be duly and elaborately dressed and decorated for Fourth of July celebrations, or civic festivals of all descriptions. Washington's birth-day, or Jackson's eighth of January victory, might call troops of listeners to hear, in the temple of God, laudatory and eulogistic harangues, marching in with banner and plume, sword, musket, and bayonet, and making the old rafters ring with the deafening clang of fife, bugle, trumpet, and drum, laying all the martial array—belts, and cocked hats, and sheathed swords—on the sacramental table, and planting banner and spear by the altar of God; but the glorious coming of the blessed Redeemer of man, the humble birth-day of the unblazoned and noiseless "Prince of Peace," was worthy of no note, and the blessed day was suffered to pass with less demonstrative observance than "town-meeting" or "election;" and a sprig of holly, or a green boxen cross, would have been held as an idolatrous and heathen innovation, synonymous with "saint," "virgin," or "image worship." So they called the day the festival of "Santa Claus," and bowed down and paid homage to the gift-dispensing saint, every man after his own heart; and innocent and inoffensive are the honors paid to the saint, on the home and household shrine: holy and heart-warming the promptings of love which speak in the simple tributes and trifling offerings of honest affection interchanged round the homestead board.

Miles of "father's Sunday stockings" might have been seen suspended on shovel-hooks, bed-posts and thumb-latches,

selected from the great "squaw-basket" under the bed, because of their capacious dimensions, on that pleasant Christmas-eve ; and scores of little frowzy white-heads nestled away between the blankets hours earlier than usual, that they might not delay the arrival of the good Saint, listening, and waiting, and longing for morning, till sleep overpowered curiosity, and the long, dangling yarn stocking was forgotten. Many a crooked sixpence, and smooth shilling depreciated to ninepence, many a tenpence and two cents to make a shilling, were quietly dropped into "Frankey's till," either at "north" or "south-end" branch, in exchange for the coveted treasures which were to make glad those little beating hearts to-morrow. Many a brown-handed laborer brought forth the hard-earned pennies which were to purchase bright eyes and smiling lips, to grace and cheer his "candle-light" morning meal. Many a neat splint basket, containing the hoarded eggs, was slyly conveyed, while the children were in school, to the store, and the purchases as slyly taken home, under the ample folds of the great scarlet and gold-colored meeting-shawl. Many a neat-limbed, well-proportioned man of dough, found his limbs suddenly expanding, and his fine symmetry destroyed, by a plunge in the fiery fluid—sad types of their reasoning prototypes, growing redder and broader in their deadly absorption. Great was the destruction of cakes, candies, and nuts, and great the enjoyment of the little demolishers, in the acquisitions of dolls, knives, whips, and skates ; and so Christmas was gone in the train of buried centuries, and the joys it had yielded were forgotten in the restless reaching after others. Its toys were soon soiled and broken, and its pleasant pastimes were among the by-gone things of yesterday, and Sea-spray had not grown wiser or better for its teachings.

CHAPTER XII.

It was cold, "shut-up weather" in Sea-spray. The beautiful, soft, sunny days of the early season had given place to winter, in all its rugged reality. Sleet and snow one day glazed the earth, rendering footing dangerous. Rain and thaw, the next, rendered out-of-doors exercise doubly disagreeable. Happy was it for those who could now find amusement and pleasant occupation at home; who could draw quiet fire-side enjoyment from their own resources; and, in books, work, and rational and enlivening interchange of sentiment and feeling, forget the elemental commotion without; and, enjoying the few but peculiar pleasures of winter, wait patiently for spring.

For the gay and pleasure-seeking, Sea-spray was a sad, dull place in winter; and for any purposes of recreation, or justifiable and innocent gaiety, it afforded no resources. There was no place for amusement ever available; no lectures, either scientific or moral; no pleasant reading-room, where the young men could pass a pleasant or profitable hour; no associations of any kind for mutual improvement or for friendly, familiar, social intercourse.

The post-office was a sometimes resort, but it was also a variety store; and, though always quiet and perfectly re-

spectable and orderly, was generally, in the long winter evenings, too full of a motley concourse of loungers, collected either in furtherance of their own proper business, or for the sake of warm quarters, to be an agreeable stopping-place for conversation or information. The "stores," however, were the most frequented lounging-places for the idle and unoccupied, where they congregated to discuss business, to make bargains, to hear and tell the news, and to gather the rich morsels of gossip, of which, in Sea-spray, there was seldom any dearth. There was kept the bulletin of domestic and village affairs; foreign news bulletins being issued nightly, after mail hours, from the post-office, where eager politicians and price-current inquirers resorted, to hear the news read by the obliging postmaster; he being, by universal consent, voted the best public reader in Sea-spray. From the domestic bulletin was issued, at all hours, the last item of village gossip, incipient courtships, broken off treaties of marriage, dreadful sicknesses and miraculous cures, wounds healed by a look, broken bones mended by a touch, and dislocated joints winked back into their sockets, suspected marriages and rejected offers, and every little "faux pas" or malapropos proceeding in all grades and classes of society, in all districts of the village, past, present, and prospective. Here they ate apples and candies, cracked dry nuts and dryer jokes, fired squibs and point-less jests at each other, talked, and laughed, and smoked, and idled away time, doing neither harm nor good, but keeping care and blue devils at a distance, taking coolly and good-naturedly whatever was aimed at them, rising regularly, shaking the peanut shells from their garments, and going home at nine o'clock.

The great temperance reform had put a dead stop to all

roystering games, and passing round the hat for the next quart was heard of no more. Even cider was a prohibited indulgence, and poor, demure Sea-spray had been wrung dry, and re-wrung, till there was not a drop of fun left lurking in the hem of her garments.

An apple, a pinch of peanuts, and a sixpenny junk of sarsaparilla compound, was the extent of an evening's investment, and who, pray, need to grudge that?

They were a jolly, honest, intelligent community of "who cares for you?" fellows; and they would have gone to Sontag's concerts, and paid for a first-class ticket, if it had suited her to come to Sea-spray. But what could they do down there, with the sea-fog condensing in their eyebrows and making weeping willows of their whiskers, but do nothing, and laugh at it? For the gentler sex there was no resource left, but singing assemblages for the members of the choir once a week, and prayer-meetings as often.

The last great revival had dealt the death-blow to dancing; and whist was voted out of the village. The violin now was heard no more, except in church, or wailing forth Old Hundred at "the store," where also met the male members of the village choir for occasional practice; and deep, solemn and fine vocal music sometimes rose loud and clear over listening Sea-spray. Once in a long, long time, some young native would bring home his new bride, and then, would be an occasion justifying some outbreak of frolic. When the "old-married folks" were summoned to the home-coming, then would come down storms of uproarious jollification. The old, long-exploded plays would be brushed up from some unexplored corner of memory, and the old village would ring and roar again with "Oats, peas, beans, and barley, oh!"—"Brother Philip,"—"Salute the Grand

Turk," or "Break the Pope's neck,"—phrases now-a-days awakening ideas of more portentous meaning, than making wry mouths in the face of a bashful old bachelor, or twirling a pewter platter to win a kiss from a blushing girl.

Sea-spray, then, though far removed from the reach of fashionable, and, possibly, demoralizing amusements, was a harmless, snug little abode, with room enough for a contented heart; temperate, moral, religious, with soil rich enough for the growth of truth, honor, honesty, and all holy and happy influences. If it was not cultivated as carefully as it might be, she at least had yet to find a sister village that should dare to commence hostilities, by casting the first stone at her.

"Town Pond" was frozen at last. Skates, filed and new strapped in November, had been all winter objects of glum and mournful consideration. But "Town Pond" was frozen. Ernest and Allen had been greeted with the glad news; and, having called in council their trusty coadjutors, Thomas and George Fuller, who were their oracles on all questions of doubtful expediency, it was voted safe to venture, the ice being pronounced reliable.

It was a bright, keen day, and "Town Pond" glittered in the sun, in tempting and treacherous slipperiness. Troops of boys were circling, and wheeling, and darting away on long pulls, and be vies of timid little girls were trying their prowess in short slides across the narrow end; here and there one, with a stronger and more masculine command of limb, venturing the admirable feat of sliding "squat," much to the envy of their less energetic play-mates. Ernest looked on with great interest; but he had no skill on the ice, and his first step was a failure. The boys could not enjoy any sport in which the delicate, pale little stranger

could not participate. So Allen and George took off their skates, and ran back for "Gazelle," with which they were soon at the verge of the pond, ready for action. Harnessing themselves to the little fairy sledge, and seating Ernest on it with the reins in his hands, off they flew like the wind, round and round the long pond, the admiration of all the shouting lookers-on, Ernest laughing, and breathless with delight. They had stopped at the northern extremity of the pond to rest, and gather strength for another race, standing panting and silent by the side of the sledge, when the old town clock began, slowly and solemnly, to toll off twelve o'clock. Ernest started and listened, then turned to look. There, on the hill-side, its little white tablet gleaming in the sun, lay Edith's grave! Sweet little Edith within the sound of his merry laugh, the sister he had so loved, and still so deeply mourned. A groan broke over Ernest's pale lips, and the healthful glow of exercise and pleased excitement faded from his face. Allen saw that he was exhausted, and kindly suggested that he was fatigued, and that they would go home.

"No, Allen, not fatigued; but see, yonder lies Edith, in her cold, dark grave; and I could laugh, and be glad so near."

Allen comprehended now. He remembered when he stood where they now stood, looking out upon the boys at play, with no heart to join them, and wondering anybody could laugh and be happy, when his own blessed little brother lay so near them on the hill, and the first snow of winter lying white on his little grave. So he tried in his child's way to soothe and comfort Ernest: telling him how he had felt, and how time had come with healing; and he could keep his brother's place warm in his heart, and think

of him often and fondly, and yet enjoy life and love play. But it did not comfort Ernest. Whom did it ever comfort to be calmly told, in the anguish of bereavement—"Oh, you wont feel so always. You will get over it, and take pleasure in other things?" And who that has spurned the suggestion as the most painful and revolting to the broken and bleeding heart, has not found it true, nevertheless? Who has not found, under similar afflictions, the most potent condoler, Time?

Allen took off his skates, and with his friends, the Fullers, accompanying and assisting in drawing "Gazelle," they kindly encouraged and cheered their grieved little companion, leading him by the hand, and picking the smoothest footings for his weak, trembling steps.

"Do'nt tell, papa, Allen; please do'nt. Poor papa does so wish to see me happy, and he will be so sorry and disappointed to have me come home disheartened and sick. I will go into the kitchen and sit by Dury's big fire till I get over it."

Accordingly the boys went in at the back yard gate, and into the house by the kitchen entrance. .

Allen hung up his skates out of Ernest's sight, and generously resolved to say nothing about skating in his hearing.

"Ah, boys," said Evelyn, when they met at the dinner-table, "what of the skating? Did you have a fine time?"

Allen came to Ernest's relief, answering for both. "First rate, but it was rather cold on the pond, and we did not stay long."

"And what did you do, as you can't skate, my son?"

Ernest began to tell how the boys had given him a ride on "Gazelle;" but disingenuousness had no place in his

composition, and his truthful heart could not let him take the first step in the art of dissembling. He stopped, faltered, and burst into tears.

"Forgive me, dear papa. I can't deceive you, though I did think I would try. Only I did so wish to have you think I had been very happy. And so I was, till the church clock tolled out, and it sounded as it did when Edith was being carried to her grave. And then I looked up, and I saw the little grave all alone on the hill; and I felt, oh, how cruel for me to be laughing here, and she lying there. And I could not help it, papa; and then the boys left their pleasant play and came home with me, and I knew I was selfish to let them. And then I tried to deceive you, papa, and asked Allen to help me; and that was so wicked, and I am so sorry, for I knew you would rather I should be sick and sorrowful than to be wicked."

Ernest told his story; manfully keeping back his tears, and choking down his sobs till it was all out.

"I am sorry, Ernest, that you attempted to deceive me, and glad to find that you could not do it. I shall excuse you entirely, for the motive was a generous one. But, as you say, Ernest, I would rather you should sorrow than sin; the one I may soften and soothe, the other it is not mine to forgive. The offence, so far as it is against me, I freely pardon. If you have sinned against your conscience or your God, Ernest, it is not with me you have to deal."

"I have relieved my conscience, papa, by telling you the truth boldly. I knew I never could rest with a secret in my heart, till I had confessed it. Oh, it must be dreadful to carry a lie about in the bosom. I never will try to tell or act one again," said Ernest, his face lightening with the sense of relief, while Ada sank back almost fainting in her

chair. Sudden indisposition was a frequent thing with Ada.

Days sped away, and soon counted weeks; and weeks followed each other in the same old-fashioned way in which they had rolled along from the beginning. Little occurred to disturb or diversify the peaceful monotony of Sea-spray life. Ernest and Allen spent their time pleasantly, for the libraries, the kitchen, and Christmas-box furnished many resources; and the Fullers came often to spend a cheerful evening; and Charley and Eddy Osgood came, with their round, handsome faces, and bright, roguish eyes, to play "blind man's buff" and "hunt the slipper," and to help to rig ships and build sleds; and sometimes they snuggled close in the corner, and coaxed Dury to tell them a story. And she would tell, in her slow, solemn tones, a pitiful tale of the "lost babes in Hether woods;" and how they wandered, and wailed, and wept; and how even now, in the still snow-storms, their cry was sometimes heard sounding out iver so doleful; and how, finally, they lay down hand in hand, and said their prayers, and died. And how the little red-winged wood robins came and kiver'd 'em all up with the great brown oak leaves and the soft green moss, and then sotted on the trees, they did, right over 'em, and sot and sung and sung all day so solemn and sad. And then Bumbu, a wicked westerly Ingin, came along with his great bow and flint-pointed arrow, and shot the little robins a-sottin on the trees a-singin; and then how the old Cheepi came a tearing along, and took that are wicked westerly Ingin, and jumped right straight off "Light-house Hill" into the oshin, and nobody niver seen him no more.

Dury's melancholy tale generally closed the evening's

performances; and the boys would huddle close together, and take hold of each other's hands, and go home with their eyes shut, trembling lest they should see "old Cheepi and that wicked westerly Ingin on his back."

"Papa, may I go to the evening meeting with Allen?" asked Ernest, one bright moonlight evening.

Evelyn never refused a request without a good reason, and, as he saw no objection, he made none, and the boys went. When they returned, they came in at the back door into the kitchen, which was the great rallying point when coming from without, to dry or change shoes. Evelyn, who had been taking a solitary moonlight stroll, sat drying his boots at Dury's fire, and the boys drew in their chairs beside him. They all seemed busy with their own thoughts. At length Allen broke the silence by asking,

"Is it generally supposed that when people die, they go at once to Heaven, and see God?"

It was a strange question for a boy of nine years to ponder, and Evelyn answered by asking another.

"Why do you ask that, Allen?"

"Because there was a lady buried yesterday, and one of the men that exhorted, said she was now singing praises with the redeemed of all ages, before the throne of God, and I thought folks had to be judged before they went to heaven, and then I thought if they were judged one by one as they died, what need was there of any great general judgment, or would they be judged twice? It was all a new thought to me, and I could not make it out."

Evelyn looked with curious wonder at the little sober face of this young searcher into mysteries, hardly knowing how to answer without bewildering, more than he enlightened him:

“You have asked a question, Allen, I can hardly answer to your comprehension. It has disturbed older heads than yours, and occupied the attention of sounder and wiser theologians than I am, or many that I know; but I will try to tell you as far as I can make it plain. It is a doctrine of the church in which I was educated, that there is an intermediate state, neither of perfect blessedness, nor of utter misery, into which the disembodied spirit passes; that there is a place for the evil-doer, and a place for the righteous lover of God’s laws. It is considered a place of rest, and also of progression, where the spirits of the just and of the unjust alike await the final coming of the Lord.”

“But where is it, papa? If it is not Heaven is it Paradise? I thought that Paradise was where Adam and Eve lived, and that was on the earth.”

Evelyn smiled at the perplexity in which the little frequenters of evening meetings were involved, but he answered kindly:

“That was what we call ‘Terrestrial Paradise,’ my son, and we say Paradise when we speak of the spiritual abode of the happy. Some think it is the place which the Jews called the ‘bosom of Abraham,’ the father of all true believers, and that such was the right interpretation of our Savior’s words to the penitent thief, “This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.” All divines use the word Paradise in reference to that Heaven which is to be the final residence of the redeemed and happy, but there are different opinions on the subject, not important to be examined or explained now. The Greeks speak of two sorts of Paradise, the first a place of light and rest, wherein the blessed await the last judgment, which they call Paradise,

Light, Life, Happiness, and Mansion of the Living ; the second the Eternal Happiness which they shall enjoy in Heaven after the day of judgment."

"But where was Adam's Paradise, papa? that beautiful garden where they lived so happy before the serpent got in."

"The learned fathers and doctors of the church have studied, and examined, and disagreed, and failed to be satisfied. Some say it was on the islands of the sea, some on the high mountain tops, some say it was in that part of the world called Palestine or the Holy Land ; others, again, urge that the Deluge entirely destroyed all its distinguishing characteristics, that no vestige remains of its primeval beauty, and that all search for its peaceful and pleasant localities is useless and absurd. I have told you Allen, all that I think your question required—have I made it plain?"

"I think I understand what you have told me ; I only asked because I had never thought of it before, and I did not know but everybody thought what was most agreeable to themselves to think. I did not know that the church taught any doctrine about it ; but Ernest and I were talking about it coming home, and we did not know what to think."

"It is a received doctrine of my church ; perhaps it is not exactly a fundamental point to be subscribed to. Do you know what I mean by fundamental, Allen?"

"Important, essential, lying at the foundation," replied Allen, promptly.

"It is not necessary, Allen, for you and Ernest to give yourselves any trouble on such points ; you can hardly be expected to handle them yet."

"I was not troubled, I was only curious." And, with this reply of Allen's, the conversation ended.

The winter was drawing to a close, and nothing of interest occurred to distinguish its last lingering days. Evelyn went out daily to visit Edith's grave, and watch that no rough step came nigh it; occasionally calling for his letters and papers at the Post-Office, sometimes strolling out for a walk with the boys, or accompanying Col. Hesselten in a chatty promenade over his premises; once or twice taking a brisk walk with his kind, sociable, and attentive friend, Mr. Alden, and dropping in for a few moments at the bright, cheerful, hospitable little parsonage.

Ada never had ventured out of doors, and her only change was from the dining-room and Dury's dominions, back to her own apartment, where, with the conversation of her husband and her child, and the occasional assistance of work and books, she whiled away the dull days of her voluntary imprisonment.

So Winter was gone.

Now comes sweet Spring, with so t and stealthy tread,
Smoothing the foot-prints of her rugged sire,
Bidding chilled flowrets lift the timid head,
Bowed 'neath the frowns of Winter's stormy ire,
Coaxing green leaves to peep from hedge-rows sere,
Blue violets, forth, from drifted leaves to peer,
And sand-pinks sweet, the woodland walks to cheer;
While from the household tree, at times, is heard,
Answering her call, the early singing-bird.

CHAPTER XIII.

It was March, bleak, blustering and cold, with hoary piles of leaden clouds towering up in the north and east, —windy, squally and disheartening. Then, a deceitful, smiling day, promising more genial weather, followed by a night, rendered dreary and dismal with the howling of winds, and the lapping and slamming of doors, shutters, gates, and loose boards, on barns and fences. Then came melting and mud, nothing but mud—mud indoors and out, making every one feel muddy, morose, and miserable. Nevertheless, March was not without his redeeming traits, and, with all his surly and tantalizing humors, stood notable housewives in good stead, being a zealous instigator and promoter of all sorts of thread-and-needle industry. March was the month for doing up all sorts of confining work, and quilting-frames were in requisition. Very small boys, not good for anything on the farm, might be seen ankle-deep in soaked loam, ploughing their way, tottering under the long bars of the quilting-frame, with the pins tied together and dangling from the ends. Great bundles of batting marched slowly along the side-walk, tied to some almost obliterated little girl in a scarlet hood and blue sack. Lie-tubs were kicked along in the mud, by great lubberly boys, and great iron kettles walked back and forth across the street, sus-

pended on poles. Mud had laid an embargo on female pedestrians, and nothing short of some desperate dry-goods want called a lady forth. Then were sundry budgets of long-cut-out sewing work rummaged out from chests and drawers, and industriously sewed into garments; great, discouraging bags of cotton stockings, with last summer's holes in the heels, were patiently looked over, and diligently and delicately darned; refuse apples, and mouse eaten ears of corn and unshucked walnuts were conveyed to the hens and the pigs; and long spikes of mint, and catnip, and hoarhound, and boneset were condemned to the flames; and thrifty housewives began to clean garrets, and "upstairs" pantries, and storerooms, "now, whilst they'd got lie;" garments which would have drawn tears of delight from a Chatham-street dealer, were ruthlessly condemned to the shears; and bushels of balls of rags were cut, wound, and sent off in barrels to the weaver, to be ready for the floors, after "house-cleaning." Scores of rag carpets, long on hand, were finished up in March; and yards of faded and otherwise useless "boughten," ingrain and Venitian, were raveled and sewed into pretty fringed rugs. Great was the demand for needles and the consumption of thread, and trunk-pedlars were in their glory, trudging up one side and down the other, along the street, with their dangling boxes of "notions," and invariably effecting an entrance through the back passage, to the kitchen, knocking their trunks against the door-casings, and coolly setting them open on the floor, distracting the attention of "the help," and interrupting the progress of household affairs. But March was their season of harvest, when ladies availed themselves of the work-basket conveniences thus brought to them in their beleaguered ne-

cessity; while Frankey stood in his door, and watched the itinerant vendor of trifles thus picking up the dimes and half-dimes in his district, with a feeling of benevolent sympathy, and the remark, "Well, all trades must live." But March and mud, like everything mundane, must come to an end, and they passed away together, leaving Sea-spray with clean streets.

April came in with a pout on her lip and tears in her eyes. It was not strange, considering what was always her first duty, to open the church for "Town-Meeting." Town-Meeting was, and always had been since there had been any "Town" to have a meeting, the grand festival of Sea-spray: when the old Lion of Democracy shook his mane with a menacing growl, and the young lions looked out from all sorts of lairs, coming up to Town-Meeting to learn how to roar. First came the sons and daughters of Ethiopia, stretching forth their hands to the church, with baskets of molasses candy, and pillow-cases of gingerbread and tartlets, some wheeling barrows and hand-carts containing the heavier articles, kegs, kettles and jugs of beer and distilled waters, with everything that they could borrow or beg, to tempt forth the hoarded Town-Meeting pennies from the patched pockets in which they were burning. Stands were selected around the church, and, if the weather chanced to be unpleasant, within it, for the gentler of the sable hucksters, and by noon the traffic began to be brisk. Meanwhile, the bone and sinew, the sovereign people, the independent electors of Sea-spray, began to struggle along, sunning themselves if the sun shone, under the lee of fences, or, if it rained, sheltering themselves under the hospitable piazza of the Academy, or sauntering in and out the porches and galleries of the church, but not

invading the pulpit, because they were locked off the floor of the building; buying cake and candy, pies, apples or nuts, and, if they were of the nation that always thirst, taking a glass of beer with a sly lacing of gin from the pocket bottle of the gentle and accommodating vendor.

At one o'clock the bell rung, and the "Town Clerk," bearing the ballot boxes, with the town officials, took their seats. Order was called and sober business began. Sport and nonsense, eating, drinking, scuffling, wrestling, hubbub and confusion of tongues prevailed out of doors, with here and there a jackall leader holding a caucus with a stray limb of the aroused lion—instructing them how to vote on this question or that, and holding up to their eager and impatient gaze snug homesteads and smiling farms, cut out from the broad acres of Montauk, with fish swimming willingly onto their hooks, and fowl soaring invitingly just into their range, and spreading their wings in condescending readiness to be shot, while oysters looked up from the mud in anxious anticipation of the tongs, and eels wriggled restlessly, impatient to be skinned. It was a picture a landless man might languish to see realized. It was not strange the great lion roared on this great day, when important steps were to be taken preparatory to leaping on his prey. He had been long in training, poor beast, trying on his roar in little caucus meetings in the bushes, and lashing his sides with his tail in private cross-roads and by-places, to keep up his courage, and see how it felt to be bold and come up to the struggle with all the "big bugs, Squire Grandly and them," while the greedy, shaggy jackall, with yelping open cry in the van, still tempted him on. But the by-play and confidential asides out-of-doors in no wise obstructed the steady course of business within;

where were collected the law-loving yeomanry and substantial and responsible burghers of Sea-spray in a firm phalanx, certain of the validity of their inherited and long vested rights, and sternly determined at all hazards to maintain and defend them. Undaunted at the roar of the lion, though irritated at the unprovoked and savage manner in which he was showing his teeth, they held up the broad shield of the law, and from behind it they dared and defied him.

Meantime, around the cake and candy carts, and with the help of the strengthened beer, "the mirth and fun grew fast and furious;" and though the musician of Tam O'Shanter's vision was not personally visible, there was little doubt that he acted through his accredited agents; and, though the fluid of inspiration did not flow very deep round the church, it was dealt out liberally "down below," as was evinced by the reeling noisy little bands continually fluctuating between the church, and the mischievous little caucusing and dram-dealing establishment which had sprung up as the "headquarters" of intemperance, in the bushes below the village. Every bush had been beaten, every boat turned over, and every by-path and nook hunted to bring out the voters, and Sea-spray on that great day showed her strength to the utmost. Boys of all sizes, arrayed in the cast-off garments of preceding generations, with collapsed cap crowns hanging down to their shoulders, with cuffs turned back, and skirts nearly sweeping the ground, or with great "roundabouts" of their fathers buttoned about them, looking like drums perambulating on the sticks, lounged in all sorts of attitudes about the street, looking up at the passers by with dirty little quizzical faces, eating candy and gingerbread with a most com-

fortable and unconcerned consciousness of having come to "Town-Meeting." Little did they care about the great question of the day, or whether Temperance or Anti-temperance elected the town officers, while they rolled in the dirt and laughed at the staggering lion, or watched the newly elected officers going home in the pride of their fresh-blown honors, their faces lighted-up at once with the glow of exultation and the beams of a bright setting sun.

The advancing season rendered out-of-door occupations pleasant. The walks about Sea-spray village and its vicinity were dry and well trodden. The robins were running about the street, making the air echo with the music of their sweet little voices, while they fluttered about on foot and wing, running a space, and then flitting and looking back to see who followed, while they industriously searched out their food, or collected their materials for building on the same familiar old tree on which they had made their last year's home.

Martins, much to the joy of Allen and Ernest, began to sit on the porch before the entrance to their box, with straws in their bills; and swallows looked cunningly down at them from the rafters in the barn, laying their heads together with their funny little black caps, and chattering away as if in the enjoyment of some capital joke.

Long trains of matronly geese, headed by their strutting commander, waddled solemnly to the pond, leading in regular Indian file their yellow green progeny to the bath. Bleaching grounds were covered with curtains and draperies of all fashions and fabrics. Flower-beds were raked off, and shrubbery pruned and trained, and the great spring work was fairly on the way. Then came the overhauling of boxes and bags of last year's seeds, and the neighborly

interchange of varieties of seed peas, early sweet corn, and all sorts of savory and succulent esculents. Ada began to venture out, carefully wrapped and veiled for rambles and refreshing exercise, and Allen and Ernest to catch mummies at the bridge or sail their little ships on the pond. The Sea-spray sleep was broken, and all her little world busy and wide awake.

Evelyn and Mr. Alden were often together in their strolls along the Beach, or through the silent shady lanes which wound about Sea-spray. They were out one pleasant morning, and, careless where they strayed in their friendly chat, they turned into the deep green lane which swept round the tasteful grounds and pretty Gothic structure on the corner. They had not walked far, when they met a parishioner, with whom Mr. Alden stopped to exchange greetings always kind and cordial.

"Good morning, Mr. Follen; good morning. And how are you finding yourself this morning? Pretty comfortable, I hope?"

"Very well, thank Mr. Alden. And how's Mr. Alden?"

"Comfortable, comfortable, I thank you. And Mrs. Follen and the little ones—quite well? I am happy to hear it. And your sons in California: successful, I trust?"

"Yes; yes. I know Mr. Alden will be glad to hear they are in good health, and making money hand over hand."

"I am truly glad to hear it. And what are they engaged in at present?"

"Oh, they turn their hands to anything. A little farming, a little lumbering, a little carpentering, a little of one

thing and a little of another, as they chance to have time, and business offers."

"Perfectly right, Mr. Follen; perfectly right. It is a very comfortable thing to have plenty of money. Indeed, in these days it is very important to have money. It matters very little how they get it, so they do but get it honorably; but it is certainly very desirable to have it."

The gentlemen were about to walk on, when Mr. Follen turned to speak again with his pastor.

"I've been about speaking to Mr. Alden sometime about a family that have been in the house I occupy, nearly all winter. Somehow they got acquainted with Mr. Dalton, my landlord, you know; and he sent them down with permission to occupy his half of the house, furnished just as he left it. He gave the man a letter to Mr. Ainslie, and he has furnished him with writing, and in other ways, I suspect, been very generous and noble with him. But they seem to be miserably poor, and I think the poor fellow is on his last legs. Would Mr. Alden mind calling in to see him?"

"Certainly not," replied Mr. Alden; his always ready sympathy at once enlisted. "But what of the woman, Mr. Follen?"

"Poor shack, Mr. Alden; poor shack. I take her to be one o' those scribbling characters never worth their salt."

Follen turned on his heel; and the clergyman and his companion walked on in social chat, Mr. Alden remarking:

"I really dont know exactly how to manage this thing. If it was a family of wealth now, or one in genteel, comfortable circumstances, it would be quite a matter of course, you know, a complimentary morning call. But destitute

and suffering strangers, in poverty, if there's pride with it, —ah, it's a very delicate matter to meddle with. They may think I come to spy out the nakedness of the land; they may resent, as an impertinent intrusion, what is certainly done in pure kindness."

"Is it not the privilege of your profession to enter, uninvited, the houses of your parishioners? Rather, is it not your duty, as pastor of this pretty little parish, to make yourself acquainted with the spiritual, and, incidentally, the temporal wants of your people?"

"Certainly. But these can hardly be considered my people. They may be Mormons, or Mahometans, for aught I know. However, if they are sick and suffering, they have a claim on my sympathy, as a man and a Christian, if not on my ministrations as a clergyman. I heard, some time ago, there was a stranger, a feeble, sickly-looking gentleman, occupying Dalton's house, and writing for Ainslie, but I did not understand that he was really sick, or in poverty. I can hardly credit now that he is suffering from pecuniary privations, if he is in Ainslie's employ, for he is wealthy, and nobly munificent towards all with whom he holds any business relations."

At this moment, the attention of the two gentlemen was attracted by the moaning voice of a child, apparently near them, but not in sight. Turning round the head of the lane, which was here crossed by another road, and coming abruptly upon the cross-road along which their path lay, they at once caught sight of the child whose voice they had heard—a dirty, ruddy little girl, of about five years, with a forlorn and neglected air. She was standing helplessly in the hedge, held fast by a branch which had penetrated the skirt of her dress as she was attempting to effect

a passage over the fence after violets, and which was too strong for her little hands to break. The child was sobbing bitterly in her imprisonment, and being on the north side of the hedge, out of the sun, and full in the sweep of a cutting spring wind, was blue and chattering with cold. Mr. Alden kindly drew near the child, and, lifting her in his arms, held her, while Evelyn with some difficulty extricated her dress, and set her at liberty.

"And where do you live, little Miss?" asked Mr. Alden, satisfied before she answered as to who she must be.

The child pointed to the house to which they were directing their steps.

"And what is your name, little lady," asked Mr. Alden.

"Sike," answered the child.

"So, your papa is Mr. Sike, is he?"

"O no, indeed," replied the child, laughing at the thought.

"Papa's name is Copperly, and my name is Sike Copperly."

Evelyn smiled, as he turned towards the puzzled pastor.

"I presume your friend in the lane was right in his judgment, as to the literary propensities. The name is probably Psyche."

"My name is Sike; there's no 'kee' to it. Mother says that's babyish, and she won't let father call me Siky; she says it's weak," said the young lady, rather pertly.

"You have not lived here long, I think," inquired the pastor.

"No; we come from New-York, for father was sick, and it tired him to tend baby. Mother had to go to 'sociation so much, grandfather Copperly thought we had better come in the country. So the nice little gentleman with the pretty black eyes said we might live in his house. Are you going to see our folks?"

"We heard your father was sick, and we thought of calling to see him. Do you think he would like to see us?"

"Oh, it don't make much difference what father likes: Yes, I guess he will. Oh, I am glad you are going—won't mother talk?" The young lady evidently inherited her mother's propensity, if her passion was for conversation; for she talked without intermission, till they reached the house, when she left them to find their way in, saying she was "going round to the back door, for if she went in the room father would want her to rock the cradle."

Mr. Alden knocked with his cane on the outer door, and waited; again and again he repeated the summons. After a long time, Mrs. Follen came to the door, the very personification of housewifely neatness, apologizing for the delay, by saying she was busy on her bleaching ground, and had just come in. At Mr. Alden's request, she ushered the gentlemen into the apartment occupied by the Copperlys, simply announcing the "Pastor of the Parish" to Mr. Copperly, and withdrew. Copperly rose from his chair, and sunk immediately back again, being too feeble to advance, but placed his attenuated hand, cold and damp, with a faltering expression of welcome, in that kindly extended by the clergyman, who drew a chair for himself, and entered into friendly inquiries as to his health; while Evelyn followed his example, with a feeling of deep commiseration for the pale untended invalid. Mrs. Copperly was standing at an ordinary "bureau," writing rapidly. She turned her head carelessly when they entered, but took no further note of their presence. The breakfast table stood, apparently, just as the family had left it: and on the floor near it, stood a plate of cakes swimming in molasses, which a sturdy boy of three years, or thereabouts, had

placed there for his own especial pleasure and accommodation. A cradle, with an infant sleeping in it, stood near Copperly, and his long, fleshless fingers rested upon it, as if from force of habit, for the child was still. The fire had gone out on the hearth, which was untidy ; and there was a general air of chill discomfort pervading the apartment. Copperly was sitting in a large chair, comfortable enough if it had been cushioned, in his dressing gown, and what had once been slippers, of which little was left but the soles, with his cloak flung around him, its silk velvet facings, and frayed gray cord and trimmings, speaking of better days. Phials and cups and spoons on the mantel, told of drugs and emollient restoratives, while the wan, haggard looks of the sufferer were a sufficient comment upon their utter inefficacy.

"I hope, my dear sir, you do not suffer much," said the pastor.

"Not much pain, generally ; it is this harrassing cough, aggravated by some unavoidable exposure, which has broken me down so rapidly since March came in." He stopped and panted : he had said all he could.

"March is a very trying month," replied the pastor, encouragingly ; "we shall have mild, pleasant weather now, and I trust you will recruit under it."

Copperly leaned his head back and closed his eyes, but he made no reply.

"Do you rest well ? are your nights much disturbed ?"

"Sometimes I have a pleasant night's rest, under the influence of anodynes, if I am not otherwise disturbed." He paused to rest awhile, and then went on : "I believe I am more feeble and exhausted than usual this morning. Mrs. Copperly was writing till a very late hour, and the babe was unusually worrying and restless : I lifted and tended him more perhaps than was good for me."

The kind pastor felt particularly savage ; and if looks could have annihilated, Mrs. Copperly's literary pursuits would have come to a sudden termination. But Mrs. Copperly did not see the wrathful glance ; so it fell harmless on her unscathed back and shoulders. But her task for the present was accomplished, and she plunged her pen, stock and all, into a half-pint bottle of ink, cleaned the ink from her besmeared fingers with her lips, and, drying them on her unkempt locks, came forward with beaming smiles and curtsies, to greet her visitors.

"I am certain the gentlemen will excuse me. Those lovely visions of fancy, which sometimes glance across the mirror of mind, are so airy and evanescent—if they are not caught on the wing, gentlemen, those bright flashes and scintillations of genius—we are so liable to lose them, if the breath of care or vulgar domestic avocations float over the mirror of mind, that inner temple—the very shrine, I may say, of Sike is dimmed, and the beautiful creations of intellect are lost when we most wish to secure them. I am sure you will excuse me, gentlemen, I had just then such a sweet little conception which I wished to embody."

Mr. Alden glanced at the neglected husband and the comfortless apartment, and wished that her conceptions of sympathy and dutiful kindness would prompt her to a more affectionate and faithful discharge of her conjugal and maternal duties ; but it would not answer to say so, and he bowed and said nothing. Mrs. Copperly was rather a pretty looking woman, with a slight trim figure, in a close fitting morning-dress, not over clean, with a full rich head of hair, beautiful if it had been tastefully and tidily arranged ; a pretty little foot, very carelessly thrust into stringless

buskins, burst out at the ball, and a small, symmetrical hand, which would have been delicate if it had not been dirty. She was decidedly and professedly "a woman of parts," and she looked at her guests as if she expected a "bravo," when she had delivered herself of the nonsensical piece of elocution with which she had opened upon them. If she had any definite idea embodied in the great frame-work of words which she had thrown out with so much volubility, it had entirely escaped them, or was possibly above their comprehension. So they waited quietly for another explosion.

"I am unusually occupied this morning, gentlemen. I have had the honor of being elected to lecture before the 'Association for the Assertion and Vindication of Woman's Rights,' which holds its quarterly meeting in New-York next week; and I calculate to leave, in compliance with the appointment, to-morrow morning."

"You don't mean, you can't possibly mean, that you are going to leave your husband in his present very precarious state? I will not believe you can think of it, Mrs. Copperly."

The good clergyman spoke earnestly, almost angrily.

"Copperly is more fidgety than feeble. But, admitting him to be in reality as weak as he knows how to appear, the path of duty is plain before me. The duty I owe to the sacred cause to which I have consecrated my powers is paramount; and no shackles of domestic cares shall deter me from lifting my voice in behalf of my oppressed and suffering sex." The lady paused; not that she was out of breath, or wanted words. It was merely an emphatic, impressive pause, the eloquence of manner, more persuasive than words; a little interval, to let the thrill of

admiration subside in the hearts of her hearers before she gave them another shock. Meantime there were manifestations of uneasiness among the blankets. The lady turned, with a gentle reminder: "the cradle, Copperly." Copperly laid his hand on the cradle, with scarce the power to move it, and Mrs. Copperly went on:

"Emancipation, gentlemen; emancipation—(the cradle, Copperly)—emancipation, gentlemen, is now the great battle-cry of my hitherto benighted and derogated sex—(the cradle, Copperly)—the watch-word, the countersign—(I say, Copperly, the cradle)"—Evelyn put his hand on the cradle, and the speaker resumed: "Emancipation, gentlemen, let me say"—and the lady rose in the warmth of her subject—"emancipation is the grand cabalistic rallying-cry of my protesting and chain-breaking sex. Woman is waking up, gentlemen; woman is aroused to a sense of the deep injustice to which she has been the slave."

Copperly began to cough. Mrs. Copperly shoved the spittoon nearer him with her foot, but did not look towards him.

"The grand question, gentlemen, of woman's inalienable rights"—Copperly's cough increased, and the babe nestled and whined. "The cradle, Copperly." Evelyn was swinging the babe in its nest, but she did not perceive it.

"The grand question of woman's emancipation from the iniquitous bondage under which she has so long groaned"—

Copperly's cough became dreadfully distressing, and he was exhausted and almost helpless. The attention of the kind visitors was entirely engrossed in the vain endeavor to minister to his relief, while the lady, intent on rehearsing her speech before the "Association," proceeded:

“The grand question has at length been agitated, and the whole world is heaving in the throes of a mighty revolution. Woman is in the field. She is mustering her forces; she is marshaling her hosts. My sex has at last arisen to assert the dignity of woman, and our cry is, equality: equal civil rights and political privileges. Our demands are office, station, prerogative, precedence, power, emancipation from the galling yoke of subjugation. Our motto is, ‘down with man’s supremacy,’ and our march is onward.”

The lady came to a pause, and set down her foot, with a flourish, in the plate of molasses. Her onward march was stayed for the present, and she had the womanly grace to blush at her ridiculous position. Copperly had ceased to cough; but he was lying back in his chair, panting and weary, the great drops of perspiration standing cold on his hands and face. Mr. Alden took the tongs and endeavored to awaken the fire, but it was out of the question, and he called Mrs. Copperly’s attention to the fact, reminding her that the room was too cold for her husband’s comfort or safety, and that he needed kind nursing and unremitting care. She seemed to feel a little conscious of her neglect; and coming up to his chair with some show of feeling, she inquired:

“Can I do anything for your comfort, Andrew?”

Copperly opened his eyes with an expression of pleased surprise at the unwonted attention, looked her full in the face for a moment, and then replied in a hoarse whisper:

“Stay with me, Susan, a little, very little while longer.”

“What! and disappoint the Association? It is absurd to ask it—it is utterly impossible. Are you mad, Copperly?”

"Are *you* mad, Mrs. Copperly?" asked Mr. Alden, provoked beyond his endurance with her heartless folly. "Are you mad, that you cannot, or will not see that your husband is dying? How can you leave him? Who is to take charge of your little ones, or superintend your domestic affairs, if you abandon them?"

The lady turned upon the speaker with a look of angry surprise.

"And may I not be allowed to be competent to make my own arrangements? It is time, indeed, that the rights of my abused sex were asserted, when a man, an entire stranger, presumes to meddle with my private personal and domestic concerns. You may attend to your preaching, sir priest, if that is your vocation, and leave me to manage my own affairs."

"Susan, Susan, you will kill me! Are you utterly lost to reason and common sense?" panted poor Copperly.

"Never mind, never mind. I did speak rather plainly, perhaps. It was none of my business; let it pass. I am not disturbed by it, don't let it distress you. That is the only thing that is of any consequence in the business," said the kind clergyman, who could have laughed heartily at the rebuke he had called upon himself, but for the pain it had caused elsewhere.

Mrs. Copperly left the room in search of fuel, and Copperly expressed, in few and broken sentences, his thanks to the gentlemen for their kindness, and his earnest wish that they would come soon again to visit him.

"Bear with poor Susan. She was not what she is now, when I married her—she was neat, industrious, unpretending and affectionate—a discreet, prudent, loving wife—a fond, devoted mother. My little home was a paradise.

The wild notions of the day have ruined her. Come again, gentlemen. It won't be long that I shall need care from any one. I have sent, without Susan's knowledge, for my father. I hope things will mend, under his influence."

Copperly was rallying, under the influence of an opiate, and the gentlemen left him, promising to see him again, soon. They had walked some distance from the house, before either spoke. Then Mr. Alden broke the silence, remarking :

"What a wretched life for poor Copperly? Heaven help the man who is married to a 'woman of talent.'"

"You would hardly call the silly, slatternly woman we have just seen, a 'woman of talent,'" replied Evelyn.

"No; I did not mean to admit her pretensions to actual intellectual superiority. I meant women of her class—aspirants for positions they have not capacity to fill—presuming to teach, when they are almost incapable of learning."

"I should think Mrs. Copperly had just that little, mischievous smattering of magazine literature and parlor small-talk, which is calculated to make a silly parrot of a woman of frivolous intellect, who, in her weakness, does not know quite enough to understand her deficiencies of capacity and culture. But," continued Evelyn, "what are we to do for the poor, helpless husband? This seems to be a case calling for prompt action. For any pecuniary aid, I shall be happy if you will look to me. For the mode, I look to you."

"I thought we would look round this way, and drop in upon our good friend, Mr. Welby. I always like to enlist his sympathies in all matters calling for substantial aid; for his hand is always open, and ready for any good work."

As they walked on, the road they were following led along the rear of the dwellings on the western side of the main street of the village; and Mr. Alden enlivened the way with much interesting chat, as the different objects in view suggested matter for comment; pointing out pleasant locations for dwellings, and tracts of land eligible for investment of capital and capabilities of improvement.

Evelyn listened and observed with interest, for his determination to make Sea-spray his home eventually, strengthened daily, and he wished to be not merely a resident, but to be received as an active, useful citizen, a neighbor and friend, by the people among whom he had chosen to cast his lot.

"I understand, by the by, Mr. Evelyn, that the Grandly place is for sale. Would not that meet your views? It is a very pretty situation, within very convenient distance of all places of business, the church, schools, post-office, &c. The house is modern and commodious, and the grounds dressed expensively and tastefully."

"It would be just the place to suit me; but Mrs. Evelyn makes it a point that our residence be out of the village, and entirely secluded."

"She is very averse to society, I observe," remarked Mr. Alden.

"She is. I hope she will overcome the feeling. It is the result of peculiar and painful trials, and has been so strengthened by long indulgence, that it has become a confirmed trait of character. I am anxious to see her get the better of it; it deprives us both of much pleasant social intercourse."

A shade came over Evelyn's countenance, and he sighed as he concluded.

It was plain to Mr. Alden's watchful eye that there was a cloud upon Evelyn's domestic relations, and that he was not himself fully acquainted with all the motives which actuated Ada's sometimes wilful decisions.

The gentlemen by this time had made the circuit of the block, and reached the residence of Mr. Welby, who rose with cordial greetings from his study chair, and advanced with extended hand to welcome his guests.

After some preliminary chat, Mr. Alden opened the object of his mission. But few words were needed. "Suffering," "destitution," were the "open sesame" to Mr. Welby's heart, to which the appeal of the poor and needy was never made in vain.

"You know, Mr. Alden, I am altogether inefficient in the sick-room, being wholly unaccustomed to anything of the kind ; but for whatever is needful in pecuniary matters, I am at your service. It will give me great pleasure to be your banker. You will act, if you please, in this business in your own name. I should dislike to appear in it. It is the province of your calling, but would be excessively awkward for me, an utter stranger."

Mr. Welby's hand was on his cabinet key, for his feelings were not of that convenient kind that can find pleasantest vent in words, nor of that lachrymose character that is pacified with a groan and a sanctimonious roll of the eyes, with a scant tear in one corner ; but they generally took the surest and shortest road to relief, direct through his pocket, and spoke in the language most efficacious and generally intelligible—the jingle of coin. Mr. Welby silently placed in the hand of the kind-hearted pastor a

munificent sum ; and, after some little desultory chat, the gentlemen took their leave, Mr. Alden promising to report progress on the Copperly question, as soon as he had matured his plans for delicately extending the aid Mr. Welby had so generously placed at his control.

Evelyn found Ernest and Allen deep in the mysteries of tailing a kite, surrounded by a troop of their play-fellows, suggesting, assisting and enjoying the anticipated flight. The bloom was deepening in Ernest's cheek, and the flesh was rounding on his limbs. He could run, and jump, and laugh, with as joyous glee as any : and his father's heart was gladdened in the simplest spot that brightened the eye of his boy, who, but for his occasional fits of dreaminess, was a very child, in his eager love of play and boyish sports.

Ada stood looking from the window at the busy little company tying their stripes of torn muslin, and regulating the necessary proportion of streamers to steady and balance the huge mass of bamboo and paper which they had been several days constructing. It seemed as if every pleasant sight came to her eyes through a distorted medium ; as if every sweet cup had some embittering and poisoning ingredient ; every cheerful and bright thought some overshadowing and gloomy association. Involuntarily giving utterance to her unsatisfactory self-communings, she exclaimed nervously, turning and twisting her slender fingers :

“ ‘ Visiting the sins of the fathers upon the children,’ oh that tremendous and crushing thought, how my heart writhes under it.” She turned away with a quick, agitated motion, and her husband stood by her side.

“ It is a thought, dear Ada, fraught with solemn and

startling import to parents ; and I have pondered it often with severe and searching self-examination."

"Can it be, Walter, that the sins of the parents *are* visited on the children? Is it just, is it merciful, to punish the innocent for the sins of the guilty? Oh, say not that it is: say it not, Walter, my husband!"

"I cannot contradict the sacred authority of the Scriptures, Ada: It is one of the express declarations of the Decalogue. But I do not understand it, as many do, as a threat of Divine vengeance, punishing children for the transgressions of parents. Vindictiveness, Ada, is not one of the Divine attributes."

"‘Visiting the sins of the fathers upon the children,’ the words are very plain, Walter. What do they mean, if not literally just what they say?"

"They do mean just what they say. If men make unto themselves idols of their vicious propensities—if they bow down to intemperance, or gluttony, or to licentious sensuality in any form, whereby the healthful and vigorous action of intellectual or physical energies are impaired—if they stultify and brutalize their own natures, and weaken and destroy their own constitutions, by indulgence in debasing debaucheries—do we not see the effect in disease, in deformity, in physical wretchedness, in mental imbecility, ‘even unto the third generation,’ as a natural and inevitable inheritance, Ada, not as a vengeful visitation."

"Then if you or I had committed one single, solitary, though very great sin, you would not expect signal vengeance to be executed on Ernest? He would not, he could not be made to expiate that sin?"

"Let us hope not, at least: Let us prayerfully endeavor to look well to our ways, that we cherish no unre-

pented sin in our hearts, or heedlessly expose ourselves to any temptation for the commission of new ones."

Ada was very pale. She strained her locked fingers tightly over her heart, but she made no further remark, and the subject was not resumed.

Mr. Alden executed his mission delicately. Having made such arrangements as seemed best adapted to meet easily the emergency, he again ventured to brave the wrath of the outraged Mrs. Copperly.

Much to his surprise, she received him with easy politeness, and with no apparent recollection of the offence he had given her on his previous visit. Appearances were somewhat improved: a cheerful fire was blazing on the "swept and garnished" hearth; Mrs. Copperly was herself minding the cradle; and Miss "Sike," with a clean face and a mended frock, was busily dressing her doll on the floor. Copperly was dozing in his accustomed seat, and less oppressed and feeble than before. Mr. Alden took his chair by the side of the invalid, and entered into conversation on easy and indifferent subjects, leading skilfully round to matters of present and individual interest, and drawing, without apparent premeditation from Copperly, a frank and explicit statement of his pecuniary embarrassments, and of the painful privations to which his inability to attend to business had subjected him; Mrs. Copperly pathetically expatiating upon the disappointment she had suffered in not having at her command the requisite sum to meet the expenses of her projected visit to New-York.

"And did you intend taking my little friend, Miss Psyche, with you?" asked Mr. Alden, wishing to appease, if possible, the offended dignity of the champion of female rights.

"I did not ; but please, sir, don't call the child Siky, it is effeminate, and I wish to teach her self-reliance and contempt for these little babyish diminutives, with which children and women are made so silly. Her name was Hannah, after Copperly's mother, but I have changed it recently. Syke is so beautifully significant."

"Do you intend still to fulfill your engagement, and to attend the meeting of your Association ? Don't be offended, nor think me officious ; believe me, my only wish is to make the situation of your husband more comfortable. You cannot be ignorant, I think, that his case is critical ?"

"I know he thinks it is, and I am aware that goes a great ways, but I have a mission to fulfill, a very exalting and self-sacrificing mission. I know men despise it, and deny it ; but, with the spirit of Mary Woolstoncraft in my heart, if not her burning eloquence on my tongue, or her convincing argument on my pen, I shall follow where she has led the way."

"It is a perilous path, Mrs. Copperly, and one no pure-minded woman would willingly tread. Let me hope you will not be misled by her sophistry. Have you studied her works ?"

"I am not so ignorant as you seem to suppose me," replied Mrs. Copperly, tartly.

It was very evident her knowledge of Mary Woolstoncraft, so ostentatiously paraded, was but second-hand ; and her parroted period but the remembered eloquence of some brighter light in the movement for emancipation. Poor Mrs. Copperly was not by any means one of the master spirits who originate reforming measures. Hers was not of that order of genius that plans and matures, excites and executes projects for extensive and ameliorating operations—

that investigates and overturns, and improves the existing order of things, and introduces new systems of social organization and new codes of ethics, changing the relative position of parties, making the weak strong and the strong weak. She was one of the victims of the social revolution; one of the deluded and weak, overturned and trampled down in the mighty stampede of woman rushing after her rights; and Copperly, dying, broken-hearted and deserted, but for the pitying kindness of strangers, was but one among the many who have found the fire going out on the domestic altar, and the heart and the hearth round which their hopes centered, growing cold together.

But for the neglected duties, the uncared for children, the comfortless homes, and the discouraged hearts which follow the heartless dereliction of duty of the misguided dupes of such futile folly, it would be of little moment how fast or how far the mischievous instigators tramped in their "onward march."

"I intend," said Mrs. Copperly, "to inure Syke to hardships and struggles, to strengthen and expand her mental powers, and to teach her to despise all little womanish fears and affectations of delicacy. I shall accustom her to fighting her own way, and to taking care of herself, without feeling the degrading necessity of a male protector. She shall be taught her independence, her claims to equality, and her strength to defend them. If she is to be subjected to the restraints of laws, she shall feel and assert her right to a share in framing them. She shall never be the bond-slave her mother is." And Mrs. Copperly darted a wrathful glance at her husband, who was flushing with the fever of shame and mortification.

"I shall follow the advice of Mary Woolstoncraft, which

is, 'to cultivate her understanding, to save her from the weak, dependent state of harmless ignorance.' For it is the right use of reason alone which makes us independent of everything, except the unclouded *reason* whose service is perfect freedom," exclaimed Mrs. Copperly.

The pastor replied :

"The *right* use of reason I grant you. But are there not high and holy standards for practical as well as theoretical guidance, without resorting to the pernicious teachings of a weak and fallible (even admitting that she was not a wicked) woman?"

"I have not troubled myself about her religion or her morals. All I have to do with, is, her nobly uttered sentiments on the great question so long suffered to sleep after she awakened it—the rights of my sex. Hear her concluding argument: 'Let woman share the *rights* and she will emulate the virtues of man, for she must grow more perfect when emancipated.' Denying her *rights*, you release her from *duties*, for rights and duties are inseparable."

"Well, Mrs. Copperly," replied the pastor, with a pleasant smile, "I cannot outreason your oracle, and I did not come here this time to have a tilt with you on a subject you seem to have studied so deeply, to the neglect, I fear, (pardon my plainness in saying so,) of some positive and imperative duties. It is a privilege as well as a duty incident to my calling, to reprove and counsel erring weakness, and, so far as my feeble voice goes, to recall and reclaim those whom I see going astray. Let me entreat you to consider whither you are wandering."

Mrs. Copperly looked rather pleased. Was she not enduring rebuke and suffering persecution? It was good;

and she congratulated herself in the enjoyment of a little prospective martyrdom. The idea was so agreeable, that it warmed her heart toward the person who had excited it, and she replied very pleasantly :

“ Upon my word, you put the case very plainly, but it is nothing new. Our noble enterprise has met more determined opposition from the clergy than from any other class of the community. It is not strange, for I trust the time is not far distant when their claim to the exclusive occupancy of the pulpit will be found not so indisputable as, at present, they seem to imagine it. Opposition, sir, is what we expect from your brethren ; but it will not deter us.”

“ I fear not, so I will not contend with you. It is an old saying, ‘ put a beggar on horseback and he will ride ’—a desperate chase, Mrs. Copperly ; to which I will venture to add, let a wilful woman once get well mounted on her hobby, and she will resolutely follow him.”

At this moment a tremendous outcry burst from the yard in the rear of the house—the screeching voice of a child, either dreadfully outraged or dreadfully injured. Copperly looked alarmed and startled ; and Mrs. Copperly, after some dignified delay, walked out, scorning to exhibit the feminine weakness of being flustered, but returned immediately, betraying some symptoms of silly motherly solicitude, saying that Syke, who had been some time following her own desires, unheeded by her mother, had placed herself in a position of peril, having climbed upon the carriage-house, on the steep roof of which she was now with great difficulty maintaining her footing.

Mr. Alden went out at once, to render such assistance as he could ; but some men at work in an adjoining field had

anticipated him, and were hastily bringing a long ladder from the barn, by the help of which the aspiring young lady was brought down from her undesirable altitude.

Mrs. Copperly, when she had ceased to be anxious, began to be angry, and gave the subdued and trembling little embodiment of pure spiritual essence, a severe and snarling rebuke.

"Our friend Psyche must wait till she has on her butterfly wings, before she makes another attempt to show her independence of a male protector," said the clergyman, a little mischievously, not unwilling to give the soaring mother a sly rebuke.

The babe in the cradle began to assert his right to a hearing, and Mrs. Copperly hid her face and her indignation at the same time, under the green moreen screen of the cradle-head, and, after quieting the cries of the child, left the room, while the pastor wheeled round his chair to the corner occupied by the invalid head of the rebellious little household, and entered upon a low, earnest discourse with him on subjects relating to his own personal wants, physical and spiritual. He found Copperly educated for active business pursuits, and intelligent on all ordinary subjects of general interest, with no classical acquirements, or cultivated literary tastes, looking with a sort of dull, apathetic indifference upon life, more the result of inability to cope with the cares and vexations, and consequent weariness, of this world, than of any well-founded and reliable preparation for a better.

He rather wished to die, for he was weary, and he longed for rest. He did not wish to be disturbed in his feelings. He preferred the indolent drowsiness which weakness and opium engendered. It was too much trouble to think and

examine; he was willing to glide, almost unconsciously, away from this scene of sickness and sorrow. Life had no charms, death no terrors; and of a life to come he had neither hopes nor fears. Please let him go in peace; it was too late now to think of these things. Conscience was easy; why seek to goad or awaken it? He was weary and worn out, let him die and be at rest.

Such was the summing up of all his preparations for death. "I am weary, weary—let me rest."

The clergyman was sadly disheartened; but he found remonstrance was useless. His only answer was, "I am willing to die—why do you wish me to dread what I anticipate as a relief?"

So he turned his attention to his physical and temporal necessities; and, placing in his hands the fund entrusted to him, instructed him to apply for any further assistance, assuring him it should be promptly rendered. Cop-
perly thanked him, with all the energy which the extreme languor and lassitude that overpowered him would admit; stating that, on the arrival of his father, whom he daily expected, he should be supplied with all things needful; that his father was able to provide for him and his children, but that the reckless improvidence of his wife had wearied out his patience, and that coming to Sea-spray was but to try the experiment of separating her from injurious influences, and getting her into an atmosphere which had never been tainted with the evil that had so fatally infected her.

"You could not have chosen a better place, so far as her malady is concerned. Sea-spray is innocent of all ultra-isms. Indeed, to be turned out of the "even tenor of its way" by anything, is not in its nature. Enthusiasm, in

any cause, or on any question, is not one of its characteristics. But with regard to your own health, I fear it was misjudged."

There was now an uproar in the back apartments, and Mrs. Copperly was heard in angry altercation with the self-relying Miss Psyche; and inflicting currant-bush castigation, for contumacious defiance and disregard of authority, in visiting sundry demonstrative arguments in support of woman's inherent rights, upon that roaring representation of masculine usurpation, Master Godwin Copperly.

"I believe," said Copperly, smiling faintly, and blushing at the unladylike boisterousness of his termagent wife—"I believe the evil will work its own cure. The child acts well out the principles her mother has instilled, and I think she will be astounded at the rank growth of the ill weed she has planted. The lesson will be a bitter one, but I trust she will learn it in time to save her child."

Mr. Alden went away, with his mind occupied with painful thoughts.

The family he had left furnished a sad example of neglected duties. The father, probably a moral, well-meaning man, of feeble intellect, and yielding, indolent temper, without the support or restraint of any ennobling or purifying principles, with only a sort of accidental, negative rectitude of conduct, the result more of favoring circumstances than of governing volition—not the actual good done, but the actual evil left undone, was the character of his claim. Inoffensive inefficiency,—absence of positive evil, not necessarily involving the presence of positive good, constituted his merit.

“Ah,” thought the benevolent clergyman, as he walked on his way home—“Ah, me! I know many Copperlys, very many, passing along through life, perfectly satisfied with just not having done any great evil—barren cumbers of the ground. Ah, well! doubtless the Lord has his own purposes to serve through them. It is not for me to judge.”

CHAPTER XIV.

TIME glided on his way, bearing no startling events on his wings. Noiselessly day followed day, bringing brighter verdure and deeper shade ; softer sunshine, balmy air, heavier foliage on the trees, and sweeter and more varied music from their branches. It was June, the month of beauty and fragrance above all others, and Sea-spray was wearing its sweetest and most becoming attire. It was the green season in that queen of green villages—the street was wide, and one unstained level of soft velvet sod, with its unbroken rows of flourishing shade trees, in their first perfect verdure, ere the scorching heats had seared, or the envious blighting fogs had mildewed or discolored them. Roses of every variety clustered around, or crept luxuriantly over the fronts and roofs of houses. Honey-suckles and matrimony, and ivy and flowering creepers of endless varieties, wound around pillars and over porches ; pinks blushed in their sweetness, and lilies of the valley hung their modest heads, and breathed forth their spicy perfume from the shelter of their broad, green leaves, while heartsease popped up his pert head everywhere, his wide open blue eyes staring saucily at the sun.

“ Allen,” said Evelyn, one dull cloudy day, as they were

about rising from the dinner-table, "is not this the most favorable weather for perching?"

"I believe it is: they take the bait the best in cloudy, dark days, or after the sun is down."

"Well, you and Ernest have had the promise of going to the brook to fish for perch—suppose we go this afternoon?"

Allen was ready to go, and Ernest was in ecstasies. The poles and hooks were soon produced, and the horse put before the little open wagon generally used on such occasions; with a basket of cakes for the boys, and a big receptacle for the expected perch, they set off in high glee. The drive was a pleasant one, and the boys chatted and laughed, and looked out for all manner of droll things on the road, seeing birds-nests on the trees and "scare-crows" in the corn; and if not preacher's sermons or books, in stones, trees and streams, they saw pleasure every where. The varying shades of green on the forest trees attracted Ernest's attention, and, from contemplating the quiet beauties of the sylvan scenery which surrounded them, its dark shadows more deeply dark for the sombre sky that overhung them, his thoughts went up in cheerful gratitude to the hand which had created and adorned them.

"Aint it strange, papa, that men can be wicked in such a pleasant world as God has given them? When he had made it so bright, so full of sweet flowers and green growing trees and shrubs, with the pretty birds nesting and singing so merrily among their branches—I wonder sometimes how he came to let that old serpent bring sin in to poison it all. Is it wicked to have such thoughts, papa?"

"It is not a very strange thought, Ernest; and if it is a wicked one, you are not the first to whom it has sug-

gested itself. It would be a wicked thought if it extended to murmuring and repining at the sovereignty of our Maker, arraigning the justice of such dispensations as did not meet our feelings, or further our views, and caviling against the right of the Creator to do as seemeth Him good with the works of His own creation. Your thought, my son, was but the feeling of regret that sin existed in this world, to the blotting out so much of its peaceful beauty. I have no particular fault to find with it if you let it stop there."

Evelyn pondered the words of the boy, as they rode on, in silence, thinking of the deep responsibility resting on those to whom is intrusted the teaching of an immortal soul; and asking tremblingly of his own heart, how he should discharge his trust, that when called to render an account of his stewardship, he might dare to say, unfalteringly, "Behold, I and the children which God hath given me." Well might he question of himself his capacity for performing a duty so delicate, and yet so fearfully important in its results. There is such a sanctity about the first bright dawns of intellect, in the uncontaminated spirit of childhood, in the freshness and fervor of its feelings, in its implicit and confiding faith, in the simple breathings of its unstudied thoughts and innocent emotions; woe, woe unto those who shall pervert or lead it astray, stealing upon its unguarded guilelessness to seduce it to error and sin. The heart of the child is so easily won by specious semblances, when the plausible blandishments of sin are cast artfully around him, and its baseless, and fleeting and hollow mockeries beguile him; the vagaries of fancy, the hollow and deceptive seemings of life, are grasped as substantial realities, and the perishing and gilded creatures of earth are estima-

ted as they charm the eye, ere the reason has been convinced of their nothingness, or the young and unsophisticated spirit has tasted and turned from their heartlessness. Yet have we not often seen the beautiful and bright, the excellent in attainments, the irreproachable in conduct, the pure in purpose, and the proud in spirit, go forth, trusting in the sanctity of an uncontaminated heart, to meet the temptations and the trials of a busy and debasing world? And have we not seen the spotless defiled by its associations?—the pride of intellect, the energy of enobling ambition, the lofty aspirations of genius, the ardent, anxious emulation of attaining eminence in honest and honorable pursuit, all, all sacrificed to degrading sensual indulgences?—the whole “original brightness” of character tarnished, the blossoms of early promise blighted, and the hope of eternal glory extinguished forever, giving terrible confirmation of the verity of the Scripture declaration, “He who trusteth in his own heart is a fool?”

Well indeed might Evelyn tremble, as he thought of exposing Ernest to the countless dangers and sins which awaited him in his intercourse with the world, in which he was to “live, and move, and have a being.”

He was recalled from his wanderings among the anticipated rocks and shoals, which were lying thick before his mind's eye, along the stream of Ernest's future, by a wondering exclamation from the boy :

“Oh, look, Allen, look! what funny great birds; how they wheel round and round, circling higher and higher.”

Allen looked, and explained. It was an eagle, soaring in steady gyrations, sweeping round and up, round and up, higher and still higher, to come down with more effective pounce upon a fish-hawk, which was winging his flight home-

ward with a fish that he had just lifted from the bay. Ernest was greatly interested in a sight so new, and his questions came eagerly and fast.

"Why don't the eagle go straight up, and not go round in such a circle?"

"Eagles can't soar like hawks. They wheel and circle, and go up spirally on a broad sweep; but hawks flap right up. They get higher than the eagle at first, but he can outsoar them at last, and tire them out, especially when they are burdened with a big fish."

Evelyn checked the horse, and stopped, that the boys might watch the battle. It was skilfully fought; but might conquered right, and the hawk dropped the fish, which the eagle captured as it fell, and made for his eyrie, while the hawk wheeled back to the bay.

"See," said Ernest, "how the poor robbed hawk has gone off to the bay, looking just as if he would say, 'there's enough more where that came from, and I can get them, king eagle, but you can't.'"

"Does it not teach you a lesson, boys?" said Evelyn, putting the horse again in motion: "perseverance under discouraging circumstances, and faith under losses, that if you bravely put forth your own energies, they can be retrieved?"

As they rode on, Allen entertained Ernest, whose sympathy for the despoiled hawk was strongly excited, with anecdotes of the habits and peculiarities of the bird in question.

"I don't know how they behave in other places, but Sea-spray fish-hawks are as punctual as the sun. They never fail to make their appearance the 20th of March, or to take their departure the 20th of September. They are

never known to vary one day. If the Spring has been a mild and pleasant one, they arrive in the early part of the day ; if it has been cold and backward, they will not get along till towards night, but that is the greatest variation in time they are ever known to make."

"Are they as regular about leaving, and do they go in the early part of the day?" asked Ernest, rather incredulously.

"They are just as punctual about leaving. When they arrive in the Spring, they come in detached, straggling companies from the south and west ; but when they leave, they gather in immense flocks, and soar straight up, going higher and higher, till they are lost to sight, and nobody ever knows which way they direct their flight. You look as if you did not believe this. I do, because I have been told it by old men, who are curious on all such matters, and who have watched and observed for fifty years, and never knew it to be otherwise, besides having it on the authority of their fathers and grandfathers. I hope you don't suppose that a Sea-spray fish-hawk would do anything that his forefathers did not do?" said Allen, laughing.

"Of course not, after all you have told me of their love of regularity ; but who do you think makes the almanacs for the hawks?" asked Ernest.

Allen could not tell, and they agreed to ask Robert Henshaw his opinion on the subject, which, for the present, they ceased to discuss. A few moments more brought them to the perching spot. The horse was carefully tethered to a tree near the bars through which they passed from the highway. The rods were quickly jointed, and lines and hooks adjusted, and the little party began to stroll along the marshy margin of the brook, seeking for

pleasant stands, and carelessly dropping their hooks in the little stream as they sauntered along. A shout from Ernest announced a bite, and the little flouncing captive was lifted from the brook. It was an era in Ernest's history. He had caught his first fish! So he stooped over the little shining prize, patting it tenderly as it lay gasping on the wet grass of the meadow, and turning away his eyes as Allen extricated the hook from the lacerated little mouth. But, like all keen sportsmen, Ernest soon forgot the feeling of sympathy in the flush of success. Taking them from the hook with his own hands, he left Allen at liberty to pursue his own sport "on his own hook."

Evelyn looked on sometime in enjoyment of Ernest's delight, till, finding that he could manage expertly for himself, he began to feel an inclination to play the fool at the fool's end of his own rod; so he sauntered along the brook, leaving the boys together. It was busy times, for the fish seemed determined not to learn wisdom from their neighbor's experience, but each to try a bite for himself.

It grew unseasonably dark, and Allen heard uneasily the low muttering of the thunder. But Evelyn did not observe it; he was absorbed with his hook and pole, landing a constant succession of very fine fish. Allen felt averse to hastening him, but he was a careful noter of signs in the heavens, and he knew they were in danger of a wetting, so he drew near to Ernest, and made known his apprehensions to him. A heavier roll and nearer, broke loudly, as he came to summon his father. Evelyn turned at his call, and scanned with an anxious glance the great black masses of clouds gathering in all points of the horizon. He hastily collected up his tackle, and prepared to hurry home. The perch were placed in the basket of grass, the poles disjointed, and packed without delay.

"I am sorry you did not give me warning sooner, my boys; I might have saved you a wet jacket, but perhaps we can run away from it yet. What do you think, Allen?" asked Evelyn.

"There is no wind," replied Allen. "If there was only that black fellow behind us, we might; but the clouds are heaving up, and the thunder rolls in all directions. We may run from one, only to run into another."

Evelyn looked up undecidedly at the heavens, and then at his watch. "We might go to the farm-house yonder and wait, but it is evening now; it would make it late; it will be very dark, and they will be anxious at home. I will leave it to you, boys; say, Ernest."

Ernest had an unconquerable dread of thunder; he would have preferred any shelter to being exposed, but he thought of another.

"Mother will be so frightened. I say, go."

"Come, Allen, your vote."

"Stick her through, as the sailors say."

"Well, jump in, then, and get seated, while I untie Pony."

Pony was snorting, and tossing up his head, and looking shyly over his shoulder at the cloud, straining impatiently the while upon the halter, tied in a strong knot around the tree.

Evelyn sprung into the wagon, saying as he seated himself, "Come, Pone, we depend upon you to get us out of this scrape, so I shall put you upon your mettle, for once."

"Pone don't mind a good run; he knows what's brewing as well as any of us, and he snorts at thunder. Give him a slack rein, and he'll spring for his stable freely. A free rein, but not a careless one, Mr. Evelyn—he'll bolt at the lightning."

The thunder cracked unpleasantly near his ears ; and Pone bounded forward, pricking up his ears, and snorting, and tossing up his head ; but he held on his way, every flash and peal adding speed to his feet.

"I don't know, Pony, about dashing on at this rate ; it is pitchy dark, and I know nothing of the road."

"Keep an even rein," said Allen, "and he'll keep the road. If he bolts now, he'll turn us over."

The storm was terrific. The wind began to blow with fury, and the rain came down in sheets. Ernest and Allen cowered in the bottom of the wagon, and hid their eyes from the blinding glare in the straw ; while Evelyn strained upon the reins, in fruitless endeavors to check the speed of the galloping and frightened horse ; but the faithful animal carried them safe, never pausing or slackening in his flying course, till he had passed through the gates, set open to save delay, and stood panting and trembling at the door of his stable. Lights were glancing at the windows, and a fire burning cheerily on the kitchen hearth, while tea awaited the return of the drenched and exhausted fishermen.

Ernest was helped in, fainting with terror ; and Evelyn and Allen, both pale with anxiety, agitation, and exertion. But they were soon relieved of their dripping garments, and, warmed and refreshed, were ready to relate all that had happened on their expedition.

"I wonder, Walter, that you should drive home in such a pouring rain. Why did not you stop at the first house you came to ?" asked Ada.

"Stopping was a thing more easily prescribed than executed," said Evelyn. "It was the only circumstance about which I had my fears excited. I did apprehend be-

ing dashed against some obstruction, or having our necks broken by an overturn in some gully ; for if I could have restrained the horse, I could not have seen where to guide him."

"Well, papa, you put him upon his mettle, and told him expressly that you depended upon him to get us out of the scrape. I think poor Pone did his part nobly."

"He did," said Allen, "and he shall have all the cake we brought back for his breakfast."

"Cake?" said Ernest: "cake for a horse! Who ever saw a horse eat cake?"

"Pone eats cake, and sweetmeats, and bread and butter, and is particularly partial to loaf sugar. You shall see him come to the table in the morning, and ask, as plain as he can ask, for his cooked breakfast."

"Call me early, then ; for it will be a sight to justify early rising—a horse eating loaf sugar !" said Ernest, with a look of incredulity.

The thunder squall was over, and the family scattered over the house, as suited their several whims, leaving the chilled and wearied fishermen chatting in the comfortable warmth thrown over the hearth from a glowing bed of coals.

"I think," said Allen, "bay fishing would suit Ernest best ; he would not have to stand on the wet meadow, and it would not be so tiresome for him, sitting in the boat. He could take pleasant weather, and not be out in the evening damps."

"Ah," said Evelyn, "that's not a bad idea ; we will act upon it the first pleasant day after we get over this wet frolic. Where do you go?"

"Anywhere on the north shore, where we can get a

boat. Most of the substantial farmers along the bayside keep fine boats; they are expert boatmen, and will take parties off to the porgy-ground any time. It is real good fun."

"But will you be sure to find men ready to take you off? It would be bad to go so far for nothing."

"I believe people wishing to go out, send down the day before, and make arrangements so as to be sure," replied Allen.

"Oh, that will be nice. Shall we go soon, papa?"

"Any time, after we see how we stand this?"

Ernest and Allen soon retired to sleep off their fatigue; and Evelyn took up the evening papers.

The morning broke serene and cloudless over Sea-spray, looking her greenest, and freshest, and brightest, after the rain. Dury had cooked the perch to the most critical possible perfection of brown and crispy deliciousness; and they were eaten and extolled, much to the delight of the young anglers, who picked out their bones with the air of experienced fish-eating epicures, in serious, appreciating gusto.

"Come, Allen," said Ernest, when he had finished his breakfast, "now I claim your promise of seeing Pone eat sugar."

The stable-door opened, and Pone, availing himself of the opportunity to kick up his heels and take a refreshing roll on the cool, soft turf, Allen pushed up the window, and drawing up the table by the side of it, set his breakfast of cake, and bread and butter, and pie, with the promised lump of sugar, ready for his pet, the old horse; then, striking with his knife on a plate, Pone came instantly trotting to the window, and stretched his long neck in towards

the table, placed just beyond his reach, with a soft, pleading whinny. One after another, the desired morsels were handed to him, greatly to Ernest's delight, who laughed and clapped his hands, to see the grateful pony draw up the lip from his upper teeth in smiling acknowledgment.

"Does he really try to laugh, do you think?" asked Ernest.

"I can't say I think he tried very hard, but I know he can laugh if any horse can."

So Allen having redeemed his pledge, ran off to school, and Ernest amused himself awhile, and went to his father to attend to such lessons as he should direct. But Ernest could not study; he was languid and limb-sore, and feverish, and before night he was laid on his bed decidedly sick. Evelyn and Ada hung over him with unceasing tenderness and watchful care: kindness and skill stood by him, and experience ministered unto him. But day came without relief, and one night followed another, and Ernest was still tossing on his bed, talking in the delirium of fever, of thunder and lightning and rain, of storm and shipwreck and darkness, and whelming billows; of Edith and De Koven, and wringing his father's heart with holding up his burning little fingers, and holding communication with Edith in the fashion of other days; and there was watching with weeping, and agony and prayers over Ernest, and then came faint gleamings of hope at times, only to make the heart-sinkings of discouragement more keenly anguishing: then in the excruciating alternatives hope began to gain the ascendancy, and light to beam more brightly from the overhanging darkness; and so the long, dismal days, and the long, long dreary nights dragged away, and the eyes were dim with weeping, and the hearts were faint with fear that watched and never wearied by the uncon-

scious sufferer ; and then they began to say, hesitatingly and doubtfully, " he is better," and he was better, and he began to be less wandering, and to be stiller, and then to rest and sleep, and to wake refreshed and calm from quiet slumbers, and to wear the old look of loving consciousness and tenderness and trust. And the tears were stayed, and the heavy hearts were lifted up. Then came in its full blessedness the gushing joy of relief in the certain safety and convalescence. Let those thank God whose experience has not been to taste the heart-withering agony of the bitter reverse ; who have not watched and watched, and wept and prayed, only to see hope growing hour by hour more dim, till its last faintest beam died out.

Soon Ernest was rapidly getting better ; and then he could sit up in his chair, and hold cheerful talk with Allen about the boat fishing, and then he was carried down stairs, and took his seat again at the table. But the color did not come again to Ernest's cheek, nor the roundness nor the strength to his limbs. His heart fluttered and his breath came thick and panting, if he tried to play or take light exercise, and the little creeping chill came over him, and the faint insidious flush followed it, and practised eyes saw that the canker was in the heart of the bud, and that it would drop ere long from the stem, without ever expanding its leaves or perfecting its bloom. But gradually Ernest gained a little strength, and Ada believed he would soon be well ; and Evelyn, conscious that he was building up and leaning upon a hope which had no foundation, still ventured to take courage, for Ernest did not know that he was sick, nor yet suspect the malady that was consuming him. He was " tired ; so tired : if he could only once get rested." But still he did not mend. He walked about the

house, and he went out of doors, and Allen built him a pretty seat under the great willow tree, where he could sit in the shade when the earth was dry, and the sun was light and clear, and watch the school-boys at their play, and listen to the song of the birds as they swung on the long swaying branches above him, and feed the little gentle things that came hopping fearlessly about him, and then he could ride out ; and he began to talk about that pleasant fishing off in the bay. So a grand family council was convened, and it was decided that it would not hurt Ernest if they took a fine day.

Evelyn and Allen took Pony and the rattling little wagon, and drove down to the north shore ; and Mr. Austin, who had a fine large boat and was a skilful boatman, agreed to take them out "any fine day." Ernest hoped to-morrow would be pleasant, and he went to bed early that he might get "well rested," while his father and Allen made ready the hooks and lines, and Mr. Osgood engaged to carry them in his nice "Rockaway," so there was no fear of another wetting. To-morrow came : the day was as lovely a day as heart could wish ; the nice covered carriage swung like a cradle, and everything was pleasant, and promising, and bright. Dury's careful hands had packed the great basket of luncheon with every thing that could tempt the appetite first, and appease it afterwards ; and they set off smiling and happy.

Ada looked after them, and almost regretted that she had not made one of the party. But she was growing more and more averse to going out or seeing any one. If she came down to sit with the family awhile, she would open the door stealthily and look cautiously in, starting, listening and panting, if a door opened suddenly, or a step

was heard approaching the house. Her health was breaking down. Her face, except when the unhealthy flush of excitement, or suddenly startled emotion was on it, wore the pallor and coldness of marble ; her figure was frail, and her step swerving and unsteady. Withal, there was no disguising the fact, that the root of the evil, whatever it was, had struck deep in the mind, and Evelyn had held long conversations and consultations with Dr. Hesselten on her case. He knew that mental disquietude was wearing out her life ; that some hidden care was preying on her spirits and perverting and vexing her temper, but neither knew nor suspected other cause than sorrow for Edith and apprehension for Ernest. Ada had now a fresh subject to annoy her : she had learned that Sea-spray was a place of summer resort, and she was dreading and lamenting the probable influx of visitors.

"You will not be disturbed by them," said Alice. "You can be as utterly secluded as if you were in a nunnery."

"But your house will be full of company. You will have many acquaintances among the people who come to Sea-spray."

"You need not distress yourself about that, I can assure you," replied Alice, laughing. "Seeing company is not one of our afflictions. Our house has no attractions, and we are too fond of our ease, and too lazy, to trouble ourselves with making new acquaintances, or hardly with being decently civil to old ones."

"But you have friends and relatives, of course, whom you will wish to see. Oh, it is very trying to feel myself such a restraint and burden upon you," said Ada, with an impatient tone.

"You are fretting yourself without a cause," said Alice,

kindly. "We neither make nor receive visits. We are entirely unknowing and unknown, and have neither time nor taste for interchanging troublesome civilities. If all the world came to Sea-spray, it would disturb no one but those who entertain them for pay. They come here to escape formality and the restraints of fashionable social intercourse. All they want is, fresh air, fresh butter and eggs, clean quarters, good tables, and sea room; to lie unmolested on the grass, to sit under the trees, to stroll along the walks, keep cool, and care for nobody. For all that, they have free license, or pay for the privilege. But you need not fear any intrusion. If you please, you can have your meals served in your room. You need not see even our own family, if it is not agreeable."

"But it is agreeable; it is such a comfort to me to sit down and talk quietly with you," said Ada, bursting into tears, and wringing her hands. "Oh, if I could tell you how wretched, and almost distracted I am sometimes. How I long to tell all my deep, deep misery to you, and ask you to pity and pray for me. If I could throw off this load, and breathe freely, and look my fellow-creatures in the face. Oh, Alice, I am a sinning, miserable, broken-hearted woman!" Ada paced the room, and looked the miserable creature she said she was.

"I cannot see anything in your circumstances to cause such utter misery, Mrs. Evelyn," replied Alice. "Is there anything that kindness can alleviate, or sympathy soften? If there is, I am certain that your husband would search the world for a remedy. You ought not to have any cause of sorrow that you cannot confide to him. How can you have?"

Ada turned away without a word. She turned and

came back, and stood looking Alice wistfully in the face. She hesitated, then saying hastily :

"I am weak, and fidgety, and foolish. I say a great deal more than I mean sometimes." She left the room.

Dury, who had been occupied about the room, dusting and cleaning, had heard and considered Ada's language.

"Wha's Miss Ally think ails that woman?" asked Dury.

"I don't know, Dury. She is evidently very unhappy. Is she insane, or only, as she says, fidgety and unreasonable?"

"Got thorn in conscience, Miss Ally."

"Why, Dury! what put that thought into your head?"

"Cause, Miss Ally, poor Dury's know'd afore now, how it felt to have cold stone lyin' on her heart."

Alice shuddered at Dury's words. It was the first allusion the subdued and silent creature had ever made to certain long past transactions, when she had been strongly suspected of having had fearful agency in a dark and terrible tragedy enacted in the solemn shadow and solitude of old "Hether woods." No further comment was made; but thoughts were awakened that would not sleep, and feelings of deeper interest clung round Ada. Curiosity was excited. Deep commiseration, mingled with a painful feeling of self-reproach for the harboring of cruel and unjust misgivings and suspicions, and an anxious solicitude to alleviate the distress and cheer the melancholy of her wayward and interesting guest, occupied the thoughts of Alice the remainder of the day, and the return of the fishing party was a pleasant diversion from rather unpleasant reflections.

"Oh, mother, we have had a delightful time; and I am

not at all tired, and we have got lots of fish, and the ride was so nice."

Ernest was full of glee and chat, and, as he said, not very tired; and Evelyn and Allen agreed that they had spent the day pleasantly; and Ada looked at the trophies of the day's work which filled the basket, and admired the fish, and was as much interested as she ever was in anything, and the day had passed away, thus far, satisfactorily.

It was the gay season in Sea-spray. Stages came in full of men, women and children, with dogs on the boot; and baskets and carpet-bags, and willow cradles, and basket-wagons, and hobby-horses on the top; and great russet leather trunks, with iron clamps and staring initials on the ends; and black boxes with great white letters, and little valises, and bloated patent leather bags, piled on the rack. Fresh importations of nurses, with be vies of children of every conceivable age and size, strolled on the walks or bivouacked under the trees. Ladies, in sacks of all shades and dimensions, with sun-bonnets and Bloomer hats, and no hats at all, lounged in the street, sometimes in easy morning *negligé*, sometimes in grotesque bathing dresses, and sometimes in full promenade dress, or fancy evening attire. Bare heads and bare arms flitted along in the twilight—music and laughter, and ringing happy voices sounded in the moonlight; and quiet, secluded, pretty little Sea-spray was fairly turned out of doors.

Day after day came the changing throngs: guns, fishing-rods, dogs and their masters, with sporting jackets and loaferish old brown hats, affectedly knocked into all sorts of unseemly shapes. Little chubby-cheek, brisk-looking men in glossy good clothes; slim, dapper little men in tight

buff pants and patent leathers ; fine, erect, portly looking men with umbrellas ; and slim, willowy looking men with walking-sticks ; and solemn, dignified, clerical looking men with white cravats and gold-headed canes ; and keen, knowing looking men in black Leghorns and green glasses ; and long, lank, lathey, galvanized looking men in soiled, dusty habiliments, the tops of their long rusty boots chasing the bottoms of their nether integuments out of their legitimate quarters, strolled about Sea-spray, gazing dreamily up at the letters cut in the vane on the old church steeple, and sauntering in front of dwellings, looking in at the windows and over the garden fences. Farm wagons lumbered along, with their close-packed loads of living humanity, with great bags of bathing dresses, and pails swinging under side. Little pleasure wagons, with meagre looking horses ; varnished Rockaways, with great powerful horses ; small lumber wagons, with little active horses, fatted and pampered to meet the demands of the company season ; anything and everything on wheels was impressed into the service, and every quadruped that could be carded and coaxed into the semblance of a horse, was harnessed to it, to take bathers, and swimmers, and fishers, wherever they chose to be carried.

Side-saddles were looked up, and pacing horses led out for ladies to mount, and there was hurrying and skurrying all over Sea-spray in search of weapons to kill time. Every nook was explored—every puddle made turbid. Frogs hid their heads, not daring to croak, and crabs kept out of sight in dread of hot water ; even the sharks kept clear of the shore, for fear of the amateur destroyer ; and had it not been for the merciless persecution of men, the little fishes would have had a fine jubilee.

CHAPTER XV.

"SEE, Ernest," said Evelyn, on his return from the post-office—"See, I have got letters from De Koven. He is traveling all about, and he writes now from Saratoga. He has been to the Falls, and he says he is living a kind of vagabondizing life, and is getting to be as arrant a vagrant as any lazy landsman he meets. Lundy has command of the Orphan, and is following some coasting trade, and De Koven is coming to Sea-spray, to have a day's fishing with you, before sailing for Europe, which he intends doing in the early autumn. He says, 'Ask the boys if that box is emptied, and if it is orthodox in Sea-spray to receive any but annual visits from Santa Claus?'"

"I will write to him myself, papa, and tell him how much I thank him for the box he has sent, and that he can bring us nothing that can make us so happy as himself."

Ernest turned his weary little head on his pillow, and dropped asleep, and Evelyn went down stairs, and joined Ada in the parlor, to read to her his letters, and such items of news from the city papers as he thought might awaken a passing interest in the mind of his drooping and silent wife.

Ada was sitting on one side of the window, which opened upon the street, drawn back out of sight of passers-

by, and peeping through the closed blinds at the moving and motley show. She made no reply to the announcement of De Koven's intended visit—no remark or token of interest in anything to which he called her attention as new or strange in the columns of the newspapers. She was moody, and Evelyn had become so accustomed to seeing her in that state, that he had ceased to make any attempt to coax or reason her into a better frame of feeling.

A call from Mr. Alden compelled her to rise and receive him with some show of cordial civility; after which she again sunk into silence, and the gentlemen pursued their conversation without her participation.

"I have been to see poor Copperly," remarked the clergyman, "and I find him considerably amended. His parents have arrived, and are making arrangements for taking him and the children to their own home. Mrs. Copperly has availed herself of their presence to take her infant and leave for the city."

"I should not imagine the absence of the lady would, in any degree, lessen the comfort of the family," remarked Evelyn.

"I was truly glad she was gone," returned Mr. Alden, "for I consider the mania by which she is possessed as 'legion,' indeed. If you combat one, another rises; and every argument brought forward to confute her positions, is but another proof of the oppression of which she complains. Opposition but strengthens resistance, and furnishes weapons to be turned against those who seek to reclaim her. It is a pity, a sad pity, to see a family forsaken in this manner. I cannot understand how any woman can be induced to leave her husband, still less her helpless, innocent children, to follow such follies."

Ada rose suddenly, and sprung forward, pale as marble,

and, confronting the clergyman, she looked gaspingly in his face, as if some stinging retort was on her tongue, but no words came. The impulse, whatever it was, was resisted; and, sinking languidly upon the nearest seat, she whispered, in a faint, tremulous voice:

“The room, Walter, is oppressively warm.”

The blinds, which she pertinaciously insisted at all times upon keeping down, were hastily drawn up, and a stream of fresh air, laden with the dewy perfume of many sweet blossoms, breathed refreshingly upon, and revived her.

“I see you often, at a very early hour, in the graveyard,” remarked Mr. Alden, considerably taking up a new subject.

“Yes,” replied Evelyn, “and I have learned many profitable lessons in my solitary rambles among the tombs of departed generations. I have read the family history of many of your parishioners, Mr. Alden, from the silent records of the grave. Names have become familiar, and I trace connections and intermarriages, till I feel as if I were among old acquaintances. When my own heart is heavy, and I feel my own burdens hard to bear, I take my solitary walk to the grave-yard, and, after bending in grief over one little grave, where sleeps my own lost treasure, I pass on, and count the accumulated records of another’s bereavements. I see the wife and mother in her matron prime, the clustered buds blighted in their infant promise, the fair young girl in her blushing womanhood, and the ardent boy just verging upon manhood, all bearing one name—the priceless treasures cherished in one bleeding heart; and I think how that heart has ached, and agonized, and patiently endured, and I bid my own unquiet spirit, ‘Peace, be still.’”

Mr. Alden replied, with much feeling, “I know, my dear

sir, it is no consolation in the hour of affliction, to know that another has suffered oftener ; but it is good sometimes, if we are disposed to murmur, to compare the trials we are ourselves called to meet in our pilgrimage, with those which we see others bending under, but bravely sustaining. It teaches us humble submission : it should teach us grateful thanksgiving."

"That is the lesson I learn ; and I try (not always successfully) to apply and profit by its teachings."

Mr. Alden rose to leave, and in extending the parting courtesies, he remarked :

"We have not had the pleasure of seeing you at the parsonage, Mrs. Evelyn. I fear you are secluding yourself more than is good for your health. Let me urge you to take the air a little, and accompany your husband when his walk lies our way."

"It is true I do go out but little. I have no particular sympathy with Evelyn's strange taste for prowling, like a vampire, among graves."

Mr. Alden made his adieus hastily, and left without a word. He saw the pained glance, the indignant flash in Evelyn's eye, the kindling flush that turned on his cheek, and with his own face glowing hot with displeasure, he walked rapidly homeward.

"Mrs. Evelyn," said Evelyn sternly, "I am deeply mortified at your coarse, unwomanly taunt ; I am angry and irritated rather than wounded. Have a care, Madam, have a care ! I think you have scarce the power to break my heart, but you may weary out its love."

Evelyn threw down the papers, which he had taken up mechanically, and with an air of impatience and excitement, wholly unusual to him, walked hastily through the

house and out into the fields beyond it. He walked almost furiously on. He sought to fly from the thoughts that were goading him : to find peace for his chafing spirit, balm for his hurt, crushed heart in the cool evening air, and the calm, quiet repose of the silent night, away among the green fields with their waving and rustling crops, in the light of the solemn stars, to war with himself, and to put down the promptings of the unchained demon within him. It was a hard battle. It needed the strength of the "strong man armed" to quell the tumult, to say to stung pride, to outraged affection, to scoffed and insulted tastes, "down, down, and be trodden on." He was shocked and startled, as he looked into his heart and sternly questioned it, to find that a change had unconsciously come over it—that anger and disapprobation, even disgust, sat darkly frowning beside the once sweet image of Ada—that the continual little irritations and annoyances to which she subjected him, like the "constant droppings which wear away stone," had lessened the solid masonry of love, and the idol swayed insecurely in the deep niche in which he had shrined it. Was it indeed so? He shuddered at the view which his self-examination had opened to him.

"Has it come to this? Am I so changed? Have I learned, instead of the 'soft answer that turneth away wrath,' to use the cold epithet and angry retort? Have I lost the 'love that covereth all sins,' and turned, like a wrangling boy, to bandy words of bitterness with my wife?"

He walked on, and paused by the hedge-row dividing the fields. The night was still, and he leaned against a tree and listened to the roar of the sea, as wave after wave dashed on the beach. The sound awakened many thrilling associations. Softened and subdued, Evelyn covered his face with his

hands, and there, in the faint gleaming light of the starry evening sky, he bowed in tearful pleadings to his Maker.

"Oh, thou who settest the solitary in families, let not the water-flood overflow me, neither let the deep swallow me up; hide not thy face from thy servant, for I am full of heaviness: for it was not an enemy that has done this—then could I have borne it; but it was my companion, my guide, my familiar acquaintance, with whom I should take sweet counsel, and in whose company I should walk to the house of God."

Evelyn returned to his home with a cooled brow and a calmer heart, with a determination to discipline and put down his feelings, and to keep his temper under better subjection. He found Ada sitting with her face buried in Ernest's pillow, in a paroxysm of weeping. He approached her gently, and laying his hand on the silken tresses, hanging loose and disheveled over her brow, spoke kindly and affectionately:

"Ada, my poor little petted spoiled child of a wife, look up."

Ada placed her cold trembling hand on his arm, but she did not look up.

"Ada, we are alone, with the exception of Ernest, alone in this wide world. Why should contention come betwixt us twain? What is it, Ada, this evil spirit that of late is so continually interposing itself between us?"

"It is I, Walter: I am the cloud that darkens your sun of life. But I cannot—I cannot be other than I am. Oh, that you had let the waves cover me, that you had left me to die, then had not this blight been over your days—then had not this great sin been on my soul."

"Ada, Ada! this is wild language, of fearful import if it really have any meaning hidden from me; wantonly

wicked if it be only the vehicle for the venting of impatience and vexation."

"I tell you again, Walter," said Ada, with a sharp, petulant tone, "I cannot be other than I am—I cannot change myself. Bear with me as I am."

"I will bear with you; I do bear with you, Ada, lovingly, patiently, uncomplainingly. I do not ask you to change yourself, but I do ask you to control your petulant and childish vagaries of temper; I do ask you to search your heart. Examine it, Ada, candidly, carefully, conscientiously, and see if there be any evil thing in it; if there be, I beseech you, as you value the peace of our coming years, for the sake of our darling, dying Ernest, by the blessed memory of our departed Edith, I do beseech you, Ada, cast it out; let it not longer poison your temper and embitter your life."

Evelyn drew towards him the little table on which lay his Bible and Prayer-book. He turned over the pages, but he could not read. Ada was sobbing hysterically; his hand was trembling, and his cheek was flushing with an agitation too painful, too unholy, too earthly; it was profaning the blessed volume to touch it now. He closed it and walked out into the open air, and sitting down on Ernest's little seat, under the great willow tree, he wrestled with himself in the strivings of bitter self-condemnation.

"Again, and so soon unmanned? Irritated, vexed, angry—and for what?—with whom?—for the tears and sobs my own words have called forth—with my wife, broken in health, sick at heart, weary and wan with watching—the frail, delicate thing, with none but me to cheer and cherish her. I am fearfully changed, and what is wrong in myself I charge upon Ada. I accuse her of pet-

ulance. I am, perchance, ungenerous and unjust. I must school myself anew. I must teach my heart better things."

The little village was quiet; the hurrying throng of laughing idlers had sought their homes; all was still, save the dash of the breaking wave and the murmur of the soft south wind among the dewy leaves. Suddenly there rose on the still night air a strain of music—soft, slow, and solemn; it swelled out on the silent starlight of the deepening night. Evelyn listened—and his feelings were calmed and tranquilized as he listened to the deep, powerful, pleasant voices of some half dozen young men singing, on the little "stoop" or open platform, in front of an opposite building, "Rock of Ages," "Loving Kindness," and other favorite hymns, then much in vogue in prayer-meetings in Sea-spray. Soothed and strengthened, Evelyn sat rapt in pleased attention, till the little company of singers separated, wending in various directions to their homes.

On returning to his room, Evelyn found Ada sitting by the open window, the tears still glistening on her cheeks, but the storm of passionate sorrow had passed by.

"Beautiful, was it not, Walter?" she said, as he entered.

"It was beautiful, Ada. It was just the thing to soothe a heart at war with itself—a needful and pleasant prelude to our own evening's devotions. The lights are all out Ada; it is late."

Ada drew her little bench to the table, and sat down at her husband's feet; while he once more laid his hand on his book.

"Walter, before I kneel by your side, say that you forgive me. Take me again to your love. Not till I can read forgiveness in your face, can I lift up my heart with its petition for forgiveness elsewhere."

"For every grief, for every irritation, for every unquiet thought you have ever caused me, as I would hope forgiveness of my own sins, Ada, I forgive you. Let there be peace between us, while we ask peace, and protection, and pardon from on high."

There was peace between them. There were no more taunting words, or cold recriminations. If, in the silent watches of that soft, summer night, there came to the one, dark, disturbing surmisings and fearful misgivings, or to the other, bitter, remorseful repentings, they found no expression in words; and if there was not peace within, with each other, and with the sleeping world around them, there was, at least, its smiling semblance, and neither knew if with the other it was not real. So the stars kept watch over sleeping and sleepless, and silence and darkness held their brief reign over dewy Sea-spray.

Several days elapsed before any arrangements were made for another fishing excursion, and there was quiet and apparent contentment among the resident and fluctuating population of the village. There were strivings, indeed, and plottings, among the caterers for the hotel and boarding-house tables, for the first choice out of the fisherman's baskets, for the earliest measure of clams, and the choicest cuts from the traveling butcher's stall. Churnings were watched with eager, vigilant eyes, by those emulous of sweet, fresh butter; and fearful were the forays made upon early gardens, and unremitting the espionage kept upon every green thing that shoots out of soft mould. Tall, gaunt, round-shouldered men, in "round-about" marvelously short just behind, or in long, flapping linen "wrap-rascals," cantered along the street, daily, at uncertain hours, stooping under long baskets, suspended on fanciful crooked

poles, over their shoulders, hawking anything they could lift from the water, but never crying "stale fish." If a vain-glorious hen cackled inconsiderately in a barn-yard, more than one breathless competitor would be seen running to "put in proposals" for the prize.

Housekeepers on small scales were seen, occasionally, looking in at the tail of the butcher's cart, with their aprons over their heads, anxiously chaffering for a knuckle-bone for soup, or a bit of a shoulder for "hodge-podge," never aspiring to the hopeless feat of achieving the choice pieces forestalled by the "boarders." Happy, then, was it for those (luckily, they were not a few) whose cellars were abundantly stored with salt junk; for all articles of household consumption were at a premium, and it was the season for famine, the great annual period of fasting, without its solemn concomitants, in the stormed village of Sea-spray.

CHAPTER XVI.

ON a cool, breezy morning Evelyn was joined by Mr. Alden on his walk, and they directed their steps towards the Beach, crossing the little bridge which lay almost directly in the rear of the parsonage. They discussed many topics of no particular interest : local affairs, general politics, then at the height of fermentation, for the approaching presidential election.

"I spent my last summer," remarked Evelyn, "in a little retired village in New-Hampshire. It was a smiling, peaceful place, and my life flowed away very pleasantly."

"Did you find pleasant society there?" inquired Mr. Alden.

"I never seek society of late," replied Evelyn, with a sigh. "I think I should have found it, for I find kind hearts and cultivated minds everywhere ; but I made no acquaintance, except with the pastor of the parish. I always avail myself of the ministrations afforded at the nearest place of worship, where I cannot reach the church of my own preference ; consequently I sought the acquaintance of the clergyman settled over the congregation in which I found myself. He was an old man, of the genuine Puritan stamp, and stern in his denunciations of those who were not adherents to the doctrines he held to be the only infallibly orthodox."

Mr. Alden smiled as he asked, "Did he convince you that his doctrines were infallible?"

"We agreed to let doctrines alone. It was a new thing for me to be so long an attendant upon the services of that denomination, and I pined for the delightful and familiar ritual of my own church, till it became an actual, painful want. There were some things which struck me as very singular. I allude to the total neglect of the public use of the 'Decalogue,' and the entire rejection of the 'Lord's Prayer.' On one or two occasions, when the old pastor exchanged with some younger brother, or when some traveling agent visited the parish, and turned the rightful incumbent out of his pulpit, while he presented the claims of his pet 'Institution' or 'Society,' I thought I should hear the Lord's Prayer. They did commence with one or two of the first petitions, but invariably flourished off with some sounding improvement, substituting language of their own in the place of the text, and fancying they had bettered the blessed words of their Master."

"I am conscious it is too much the case—too much the case, Mr. Evelyn," replied the pastor, earnestly.

"May I ask, is this omission peculiar to the parish in which I observed it, or is it a general practice in your denomination?"

"I fear it is a very general thing. To be honest with you, I must confess, I do not recollect ever to have heard the Decalogue from the pulpit of my own church."

"Is the omission prescribed among the articles of your 'Confession of Faith,' or is it accidental, or optional with your teachers?"

"We have no peremptory established forms. Every clergyman is at liberty to make his own selection of the

portion of Scripture to be read, and of course generally takes such chapters or passages as bear upon the subject on which his discourse is founded. He can read the chapter containing the Commandments, if that suits his purpose. The use of the Lord's Prayer or the Decalogue is neither enjoined nor prohibited; it is discretionary with the preacher. But as our worship is conducted, there is no place where the Commandments can be introduced as a distinct part of the service. I agree with you entirely. It is a deplorable omission."

They had now gained the Beach, and strolling leisurely along the sand, by a very natural association called up De Koven, and Mr. Alden inquired:

"By the way, have you heard recently from our young friend, Captain De Koven?"

Evelyn answered the question, giving his companion such items of intelligence as he had last received.

"You are strongly attached to De Koven?" said the clergyman, giving what was designed as a leading remark, the tone, if not the form interrogative.

"I am," replied Evelyn. "I owe him (secondarily that is)—I owe him life, and what I have known of happiness, since I first knew him. We have been more than once thrown together in perilous and trying hours. Let us sit down on this spar, and I will tell you the incidents which led to our acquaintance."

The pastor, nothing loth, for in truth he was not a little anxious, did as he was desired. Evelyn looked out sadly upon the sea a moment before he spoke, as if the thoughts about to be called up were not wholly unshadowed by pain.

"I was born at the South, but was sent to New-York, which was the early home of my parents, when yet quite

a child, with an only sister two years younger than myself, consigned by our dying father to the protection and care of his parents. I was educated in New-York, graduating very young at Columbia College, my tastes and inclinations pointing strongly to the church, a preference, however, which, by the force of circumstances, I was deterred from gratifying. Mary was also educated at home, and our early years passed as they pass ordinarily with those in our station of life. Our grandparents died; but we still made our home in the old establishment, with a bachelor uncle, by whom we were petted, and cherished, and spoiled, like other ungoverned children, by indulgent and fond friends. He too, died, leaving us with wealth to our heart's content, and with troops of such friends as wealth secures; but we were without kindred ties, and we lived for and in each other. Our mother died young of consumption, which had carried all her family in youth to the grave, and it was with a pang I shall never forget that I first began to mark in Mary the approach of the destroyer."

Evelyn paused a moment, as if living over again that period of sorrow, and then resumed, with a softened voice: "There was no delay in seeking remedies. The first medical skill of the country was appealed to; but the case baffled all attempts at treatment, and I saw the utter hopelessness of all my efforts to save her.

"We traveled, seeking change of air and change of scene. She was amused, for she did not suffer much; and I wandered from place to place, with a restlessness more my own than hers, for she was calm and happy, and but for my loneliness, would willingly have passed away. As a last resort, I was advised to take her from the severity of our winter, and we went to Madeira. But it was of no avail; after a short time she passed away noiselessly and

uncomplainingly, as a snow-wreath in the sun, and I was left without an object for my affections, or an interest in life. I had observed, once or twice, when I was taking Mary out a short distance, and subsequently, when I took a hasty turn for fresh air without her, a delicate, sad-looking young girl, supporting another scarcely more fragile, in a slow, feeble walk. For a time I missed them. Again, I saw the one. She was alone, with a cloud of sorrow on her sweet pale face; but the new-made grave, with its offering of flowers, told the tale which needed no interpreter. I was engrossed with attendance on Mary, and I saw and thought no more of the lone stranger. I had never asked her name—I simply saw her as I saw the moonlight or the flowers—they lay in my path, but they were nothing to me. My heart was full of its own bitterness. I laid Mary in her grave, by the side of the gentle stranger, and I began to weary of the lonely life I was leading in a strange land. It was hard to leave Mary. I stood with a breaking heart by her grave, and felt that it was cruel to leave her lying alone, among those who heeded her not; but I knew it was useless to stay, and it mattered little whither I went. I inquired, and found a small trading vessel, with very indifferent accommodations, about to sail for England. I did not even inquire to what port she was bound; my object was change of scene, and I took passage. When I went on board, I observed no passengers but one or two common-place, rough-looking men of business. Great, then, was my surprise, when the fair girl I had noticed on my walk made her appearance upon deck, accompanied by a pleasant, plain, matronly woman, and a delicate, slender youth, her son. We met as, of course, in such limited quarters, people must meet, but our acquaintance did

not extend beyond a simple matter-of-fact remark, or the occasional interchange of some little unavoidable civility. All I learned of her was, that, like myself, she had buried an only sister in the sunny land we had just left ; and, feeling too impatient to wait for her friends to come for her, had put herself under the protection of the lady, who was returning with her son to England. She was sorrowful, and extremely reserved, seldom entering into conversation with any one. I was occupied with my own thoughts, and felt no particular interest in her, and our voyage went on with little variety : from clear to cloudy, from cloudy to clear, through all the intermediate stages, was the only change. We were nearing the coast of England, and a few more days would terminate our wearisome voyage, when a gale commenced, which increased in violence till it broke over us in appalling fury. For some hours we reeled and staggered under it, when I began to notice significant looks exchanged among the hands, anxious consultations between the officers, and at length the truth came : she was filling fast ! The excitement and terror was fearful ; and I found that, wearied of life, as I had sometimes fancied myself, it was still very dear. Then it was that a feeling of deeper interest for my helpless fellow-voyager was awakened in my heart. There was a sorrowful similarity in our recent experience. We had both buried an only sister, and left them sleeping, side by side, in a distant land. There was little hope of saving her, but we could perish together. With this thought exciting me, I worked with the strength of frenzy, lashing together two bamboo settees which had been placed on the deck for the accommodation of the passengers. It was a frail support, but I felt it was little more certain of destruction than the

boats into which the crew and passengers were madly crowding. The poor girl sat perfectly helpless, fainting with terror, but there was none to care for her. How could they, when care for themselves was vain? She did not notice when I addressed myself to her; she was paralyzed, and powerless as an infant; but she made no show of resistance, and I secured her in the best manner I could to the simple, slender raft I had prepared for myself, and in silence, scarcely broken by a sigh, I awaited our fate. The boats had put off without regarding the two helpless beings left behind. The vessel settled gradually—so very gradually, that a wild hope began to throb in my heart. Hour after hour passed, and my fainting charge lay silent in my arms. The wind abated, the swell subsided, and the abandoned vessel drifted helplessly on the sea. Hours and hours passed on, darkness and night were around us. Morning came, the clouds cleared away, and we drifted on, helpless and hopeless. Occasionally, a faint expression of thanks for my care, or a whispered prayer, trembled on the pale lips of the poor girl so strangely committed to my protection. But weariness and exposure wore heavily upon us both; cold, hunger, thirst and misery, and at length exhaustion and drowsiness, overpowered me; yet my arms never once relaxed the clasp of the light form they supported. A long, deep sleep came over me—how long I know not, but a sound of voices was in my ears. I had consciousness to know that human aid was near. I had a dreamy, confused perception of faces bending over me, and the face of Clarence De Koven, then first seen, always comes up to my thoughts associated with feelings of deliverance, safety and peace. He it was, then a boy, and sailing with his father,

who first discovered us, a distant speck on the ocean, and insisted on lowering a boat and rowing off in pursuit, against the better judgment of every other man. But he ruled all on board his father's ship with the strong sway of love; and, thanks to his hot-headed determination, he carried his point then.

"On board his ship we were nursed with skill and tenderness; but it was long before any signs of returning consciousness displayed themselves in Ada. She lay in a sort of stupor, sometimes looking about her with an inquiring, bewildered gaze, then sinking again into a dozing, absent state, taking with childlike submission whatever was offered her, answering all questions readily and lucidly, but asking none in return; making no remark or comment on any subject, and manifesting no interest in any person or thing. It was a strange and perplexing position for a young man, as I then was, to have a beautiful and helpless stranger thus cast upon his care. I had no home, no relatives with whom I could place her. De Koven was a seaman, with no home but his ship and his hotel. However, he had some acquaintance in Boston, and on our arrival he found a situation for our almost unconscious charge in a quiet private family, where she found judicious care and skilful medical treatment. By degrees her health and cheerfulness returned, and I began to think of our relative positions. It was due to her delicacy and to my own sense of propriety. I offered to accompany her to England, or to procure for her, if she preferred it, a suitable companion of her own sex, to restore her to her friends. I wished first to place her with her natural protectors, and then to marry her if she would consent. To my surprise, she shrunk from the proposition with passionate protesta-

tions and tears. After many conversations, I drew from her the confession that she was under promise of marriage to her cousin; that he had been brought up with her under her father's roof, the orphan son of an only brother; that he was a clergyman, and had succeeded to her father's living; that the thought of a union with him had now become distasteful; that she had no friends, no other home to go to. He had long looked upon her as dead—let him continue to do so; the grief would soon be over, while the fulfilment of their childish engagement would but entail lifelong unhappiness upon herself and him.

"I could not say anything more. I felt that I had earned a right to her, and I had no inclination to take her to England for the pleasure of relinquishing her to another. There was but one course open, and that I right gladly pursued. De Koven added his arguments to mine, and we convinced her that delay was not only useless but injurious, and I married her. She has never recovered the shock of that terrible voyage; and our recent shipwreck and attendant affliction, have very much increased her depression of late."

"And have you never persuaded her to open any communication with her friends in England?" asked the clergyman, in evident surprise.

"I have often attempted it, but without success. The idea seems so distressing, that I have long since ceased to urge it. She never speaks of her cousin. She had no other relative. She seems to have an unaccountable horror, I sometimes fancy it takes the form of insanity, of being recognized and known to be in existence."

"My dear friend," said the clergyman anxiously, laying his hand impressively on Evelyn's, "think me not pre-

suming; but has it never occurred to you that you were rash? Did you not take a great deal upon trust?"

"I cannot deny it," replied Evelyn, sadly. "Such thoughts have intruded, and yet I have no cause to complain. She has been to me all, more than all that I ever expected to find in a wife. I knew, Mr. Alden, that women were not angels—that they were full of failings and imperfections; yet, with the exception of Ada's morbid aversion to society, and her trembling sensitiveness of feeling, I have found nothing I could wish to alter. If I could see her happy I should feel satisfied. I have never, in a single instance, seen aught in her conduct to censure. I have found her pure as the snow in word and thought; and yet her language is often wild, and sometimes, as you have witnessed, cruel. I have never spoken on this subject before; and now, but that you have seen some of her peculiarities, I should have held my peace. I seek not to conceal that my thoughts are often perplexing and painful, and I feel that I am in the dark."

"I have no doubt it is her health and her anxiety about her child. She is nervous; possibly a little hysterical—depend upon it, that is all. She will get the better of it in due time. Don't allow it to disturb you; it will all come right."

"I hope it will, certainly. I trust that this burden will be removed, for at times I feel that its pressure is heavy."

The sound of the old "town clock" groaning out twelve, reminded them that the morning was spent, and they followed the example of the many bathers and loungers on the Beach, and strolled back, along the green lanes, to their homes.

Evelyn, who had become "one of the family," and per-

fectly at home in the house in which he had become so unexpectedly domesticated, passed through into the kitchen to dry his boots at the fire. Ernest and Allen were busy in the heat of a hotly contested battle at draughts. Alice was drawn closely up between the jambs, and with a knit shawl of variegated worsteds clinging close to her shoulders, was busy in the construction of tidy kettle and ironing holders for Dury's especial delight and convenience, carrying out what was one of the governing principles of her life, that you must "save if you would spare," and that "economy filled the hand of charity;" and rendering sure, that under her administration, there should be no exemplification of the truth of the wise saw, "wilful waste makes woful want." Leena was bustling about, much ruffled in mind, with a disfiguring pout on her flushed face, out of temper because the house was out of order, with a broom in her short, fat hand, savagely punching dust out of corners, and sweeping wrathfully along the beams in the floor, kicking superfluous chip baskets out of doors, and disturbing a marauding fowl in its depredations on the corn-box.

"Hu! old hin took hint that time," said Dury, laughing at the wrath she did not fear. "Wha's Miss Leena want to kill herself for? Old squaw gonter slick up t'rites."

Dury had withdrawn to the outer courts of the kitchen, where she was occupied in some of the mystical initiatory rites pertaining to dinner, it being the "chief end of man," according to her creed, to eat, and the chief end and aim of woman's existence to prepare his food. To prepare delicate dishes and savory dainties, to tempt Ada and Ernest to eat, was a duty now which Dury religiously and unweariedly followed day after day, morning, noon and

night, with a solemn assiduity; for she had heard the mourning dove complaining in the old trees around the house, and, firm in the faith, that the warning was not for the hearer, she bent herself the more zealously to her labor of love, and beat, and rolled, and broiled, and baked, and kept the old house hot with the steam of her savory doings; following the promptings of her simple, kind heart, without ever a thought of thanks for her care, or commendation of her skill. Now, however, Dury's usual placidity was disturbed, and she put her head in the door with a look of dismay.

"Rooster's crowed, Miss Ally!" said she, with a troubled look.

"Well, let him crow, Dury. I suppose he thinks he has a right to crow on his own territory."

"Don't care where else he crows; don't want him crowing on de stun."

"Drive him away, then; you can easily do that."

"But he has crew, Miss Ally, he's crew twice clean in door."

"He is a full feather Yankee, Dury; he will crow, just when and where he pleases," replied Alice, laughing.

"Any fuss with the feathers?" asked Evelyn, looking up from the Post, which he considered the only orthodox standard of political faith.

"What, in our yard? No, indeed," said Allen, making a disastrous move. "Doodledom would call a mass-meeting of spurs, and pierce him to death."

"I am much obliged to him, he crowed in good time for me," said Ernest, in great glee, "for Allen made a bad move in consequence, and I have won the game."

"Wha' shiller do Miss Ally? 'cause we shall have company; niver knowed it to fail, nohow," said Dury, returning to the charge.

"What then, Dury? Let them come, they wont hurt us."

"Thought Miss Ally know'd how't we hadn't got noyink fresh; it's dreffle onlucky."

"Oh, that's the distress, is it, Dury? You may cook, if you please, all day, if that will relieve you."

"I knowed that afore Miss Ally told me, but if I ony knowed sartin we shouldn't have no company, we've got tea vittles enough." So Dury concluded, with great tremblings of heart and mighty misgivings, to run the risk in spite of the omen. O, fruitful source in country kitchens of subterfuge and sin!—unexpected company, and no orthodox "tea vittles"—with no baker's shops offering refuge in the pinching extremity—with no distributing carts with "fresh rusk" and "tea-biscuit," stopping in the critical moment at the door—with no little old man, with his long basket and snow-white napkin, bawling "muffins" and "crumpets" in at your kitchen windows! Who shall tell but those who have been taught in the school of careless, trust-to-luck catering, the trials, and vexations, and mortifications, and blushes, and apologies, and expedients, and fibs of a cakeless country housekeeper!

"Dury, Dury, your company has come," said Ernest, laughingly accosting Dury, as a dashing carriage, with prancing, mettlesome horses, thundered up to the house.

"I knowed they would," said Dury, very quietly; for the pain of "noyink fresh" was more than compensated by the pleasure of seeing her prediction verified.

"Never mind them, Dury," said Alice, they are intimate friends; what is good enough for ourselves is good enough for them. You need not fret yourself."

"La, don't mind us," said Mrs. Denby, laughing, as she ran through the kitchen to pluck a green apple from the

tree ; " we are half-starved, and we never have anything fit to eat at home. Only be sure and give us enough, Dury."

Dury was mollified, and soon in all the glory of "stirring up suthin' ;" was trotting from pantry to cellar, and from cellar to pantry, collecting her materials, and preparing to dive into the solemn mysteries of flap-jacks, and cream toast, and soda cake, with the seasonable accompaniment of "stewed apple," and fresh picked currants and raspberries, while the lively guests from Gosport chattered, and laughed, and made a great noise, and enjoyed everything, from the sour green apples in the yard, and the swing on the trees in the garden, to Dury's impromptu gathering of something fresh on the tea-table. So they frolicked and laughed, and ate and drank, and rattled home again, leaving Dury a more devout believer than ever on the prescience of the door-stone prophet.

Another fishing excursion was in contemplation for the morrow ; for Ernest, too feeble to take much exercise, liked the quiet, easy drive in the soft sandy roads without any jolts, and the pleasant swing of the boat, in which he could recline at his ease when tired of fishing himself, and watch the sport of the others as they drew in their captives. It was a pleasant anticipation, and he went to sleep to dream of rippling waters, of softly swaying boats, and silvery little fish. The carriage was at the door at the appointed hour, and the little party started :—Ernest in cheerful good humor with himself and all the world ; Allen pleased, but with a vague sense of sadness, originating, though he scarcely knew it, in the feeling that Ernest's fishing excursions would not be many ; and Evelyn, with a pang at his heart, which it cost him a sore struggle to

conceal, as he observed how Ernest's strength had failed since his last day on the bay. Then he jumped into the carriage with a light step; now he required assistance, and sat down silent and panting. But the great object of his life now was to make happy the brief passage of his child. He knew whither he was bound, and that no darkness lay where his journey tended. It was to scatter every cloud, and remove every roughness from his road, that his little feet should go with all possible pleasantness down life's short hill-side, that he checked every sigh, and drove back upon his heart the tears that he would not suffer to gather in his eyes; speaking always in a cheerful tone, and meeting the look of the pale, patient boy with an encouraging and pleasant smile.

They found Mr. Austin ready with his boat, and at Ernest's intercession his two boys were permitted to go with them: Jim to share in the sport, and little Steenie to enjoy the sail and enliven the hours with his childish and peculiar prattle. Ernest soon wearied of the fishing, and he took little Steenie on the seat beside him, and drew out the pure, innocent thoughts of the artless, intelligent child.

"So you don't go to school yet, Steenie. Well, how much do you know?"

"Not so much as father does; not half so much as Jim."

"That's a right honest little fellow. What do you know?"

"I know who made me. and who was the first man and first woman, and the oldest man, and the strongest man, and the wisest man, and the meekest man; but I don't know who was the baddest man, do you?"

"I am sure, Steenie, I don't know. Who do you think does?"

"I guess father knows, if any body does. Father, father, who was the baddest man?"

"I don't know, Steenie. Bad enough is the best," replied Austin.

"Well, then, since we can't find that out, tell me what else you know, Steenie?"

"Not much more, for I'm a little boy, you know. I can say 'Now I lay me,' and some of 'Hush, my dear;' and I can sing 'Loving Kindness,' a little, not much."

"Can you, Steenie? Come, let's hear you, then."

Steenie began, and Allen joined him, and then Jim, and finally Austin himself; and they went through the hymn very successfully, considering the performers—baiting their hooks and hauling in the fish the while.

Then came the distributing the cold chicken and tongue, and the bread and butter, and cakes and knickknacks, which Dury had bountifully provided, with the lemonade of grandpapa's compounding, and the "least drop in the world" of wine, for the stimulating and bracing of Ernest, in case his strength flagged.

Allen was sedulously throwing his hook again, too eager for his fun to care for his food.

"Here, Steenie, here's one of the small-fry of the family, the baby-fish," said he, unhooking and passing over to Steenie a tiny thing scarcely as big as his hand.

Steenie cast a sorrowing and almost reproachful glance at Allen, with that curl of the under lip peculiar to childhood which tells of a swelling little heart.

"Oh, it was wicked to take the poor little thing. You don't know, Allen, how badder folks feel when they's children is tokened away."

A look of sorrowful intelligence was exchanged between Evelyn and Austin, though they smiled at the language of the child; for they knew, if Allen did not, the feeling which Steenie in his childish pity attributed to the fish.

"Who knows, Steenie, but Porgy's father and mother may be in the basket. Fling him in, and let him tell them how they all do at home," said Austin, putting in his last bite of cake, and shaking the crumbs from his great bandanna handkerchief.

Steenie brightened up his face at the thought, and did as he was advised, bending lovingly over the basket, to see the meeting, and shouting with joy as the little gasping thing opened its mouth among its fellows.

"Oh, father, father, he's whispering now!" said Steenie, clapping his hands. "Allen, I'm glad you caught him, now. Fishy, little Fishy, ain't you glad to meet again, up here, out of this deep, cold water?"

Evelyn involuntarily lifted his eyes from the pale face of his child, to the blue sky above him, repeating, softly, "Out of this deep, cold water;" and, laying to his heart the consoling lesson conveyed in the simple words of the unconscious child, he once more turned to baiting his hook.

"There's just a nice little breeze now. I should not wonder if Master Ernest would like hoisting a little rag of sail, and trolling for blue fish?" asked Austin, in a half-querrying, suggestive tone.

"That I should, right well, if papa likes it," replied Ernest, eagerly.

"I've a notion they'll bite at the line pretty spitefully, just now," rejoined Austin.

So, with a little assistance from Jim, the sail was carefully adjusted, and the little boat began to dip her bows

gracefully to the waters, as she glided daintily over them, Austin steadying her course, and reeling off his line meanwhile.

Then came the real, fine sport, and fish after fish came flapping into the bottom of the boat, full of fight and fury, to be trusted in the basket with the humble little whispering porgies.

"Ernest," said Allen, "we shall have to rig baskets and poles, and peddle our fish to-morrow. I will take one side of the street, and you may take the other, and we will divide the profits. What do you say?"

"If you go, I will agree to go with you, if papa thinks best," replied Ernest, smilingly, secure that he was safe without his proviso.

But the wind began to blow rather too coolly for Ernest; the bay began to be ruffled, and to show little tossing white caps; so Austin dispensed with his sail, and, taking his oars, pulled lustily for the shore.

"What about these fish, Mr. Evelyn?" asked Austin, as he was handing the various articles out of the boat.

"O, give Ernest and Allen a few of the finest for themselves and their friends, and do what you choose with the others.

"We have had the pleasure, Steenie," said Ernest, putting his arm fondly round the neck of the bright little boy, "and Jim may have the profit. Next week, again, Mr. Austin; and mind, Steenie, find out and be ready to tell me who was the baddest man, when I come again."

"I don't know who to ask, if father don't know," replied the child, in some perplexity, as the carriage rolled away.

"Come, boys," said Evelyn, laughingly, after they had

washed and refreshed from their day's labors, "now for the baskets and poles. Let us dispose of these great scaly fellows."

"I'll tell you," said Ernest, "we must keep the very best for grandpapa; Allen must have the next choice, for his father and mother, and Mr. Welby; then you may send the next to Mr. Alden; and Dury may make to herself friends with what is left."

Ernest's disposition was voted about right; and that day followed the flown of other years, carrying its account along with it.

Day followed day, bringing in their flight no change to the aspect of Evelyn's life—taking daily his walk, which Ernest could not, and Ada would not join; taking counsel with himself on subjects upon which none could help or enlighten him; feeling hourly his hopes, and with them his hold on life, relaxing; looking back on the road he had thus far traveled, and, from the point from which he surveyed it, acknowledging to himself that it looked cheerless and desolate; looking forward with shrinking dread to his earthly future, looming up darkly in the distance, its bleak outlines magnified and towering through the mists and vapors that shrouded it, until it sometimes almost shut out from his vision the calm, clear horizon which lay smiling beyond it. But Evelyn did not forget where strength was to be found; and sure that according to his need it would be accorded unto him, he fixed his eyes on that far future which faith opened to his gaze, and as earthly hopes faded, he looked up and away.

CHAPTER XVII.

NEXT week came, and Evelyn drove down to make his appointment with Austin for his boat the next day. Austin hesitated a little.

"I had rather lotted out to go to Gosport to-morrow, the woman wants a few chores done. I'll see what she says." He returned, saying: "She says it don't matter much. She can be put off a few days longer. I'll wait till ten o'clock, it will be early enough then to go to Gosport, in case you don't come."

With this understanding they separated.

The carriage was at the door; the box with its nicely packed appointments for all sorts of angling, and the basket with its as nicely packed provisions for all sorts of appetites, were put in, and the party about to take their seats, when Ada called from her chamber window—

"Walter, may I go?"

Walter looked up. "Are you serious, Ada?"

"Yes; will you wait?"

"Certainly, with pleasure, if you really wish to go; though this morning our time is limited."

Evelyn went back into the house, pleased that for once she wished to join them, but doubtful as to its affording her any pleasure.

"I am afraid you will find it a wearisome day, Ada. Are you able to undertake it?"

"I won't go if you don't wish my company," said Ada, pettishly.

"I should be delighted, you know it, Ada. My only fear is, that it may prove too fatiguing," replied Evelyn, not regarding the snarling tone of her speech.

"I think I can endure as much as Ernest," said Ada, with a sullen air.

No more was said, and Ada stepped into the carriage. They moved on, when she discovered she had forgotten her gloves.

"I can do very well without them," she replied, pleasantly, to Ernest's expressions of regret.

"But the reflection from the water will burn your hands, mother," persisted Ernest.

"Don't be disturbed, my son," interposed Evelyn; "we are just by the store—we will stop and get a pair."

The gloves were ordered, and hastily rolled up. Ada took them carelessly in her hand, and they rode on in pleasant mood, holding amusing discourse on the various objects presented in the changing scenery through which they passed, all new and strange to Ada. Ernest too happy that his mother was with him to feel anything but joy.

"Come, it is time to put your gloves on, mother; we are most there. Oh! it will be so pleasant, to-day, mother."

Ada unrolled her gloves; but something caught her eye on the fragment of newspaper in which they had been wrapped. She scanned it an instant with blanching trepidation, thrust it hastily into her pocket, and fell back senseless on the seat.

It was no strange occurrence for Ada to faint; it did not cause any serious alarm. But this was too protracted; it began to be terrifying; and when she did recover consciousness, she was so helplessly prostrate that all thoughts of pursuing their plans for the day were abandoned.

"I think we had better drive on to Col. Preston's, it is not far, and wait till the lady recruits," suggested the driver. It did seem to be their only course. So they went on, fortunately passing Austin at work in a field near the road. He came up to the carriage, and looking in, the pale face and closed eyes of the fainting Ada were sufficient explanation, and assuring Evelyn that it was neither inconvenience to him nor disappointment, he returned to his work, and Evelyn and his little party drove on to Col. Preston's.

It was as pleasant a home as a happy heart could wish for, that pretty little abode of Isaac Austin, on the north shore of the island, a few miles from that section of Seaspray called, *par excellence*, "Town." Not far removed from the bay, it nestled itself cosily within the shelter of his ancestral trees, for Isaac Austin dwelt where his fathers had first reared the rough lintels of home; and though he had "pulled down his barns to build larger," and though a more modern structure occupied the site of the gray old mansion in which they had been born, lived, loved, suffered, endured, and died, he still dwelt on the same old spot, and tilled the same patrimonial fields; and if he had availed himself of the improvements and discoveries at which they would have scoffed; to enrich and augment them, he had departed very little from their modes of life or habits of thought.

The house, with its white roof and pretty wing kitchen

and bed-room, stood in smiling relief against its green background of thrifty young woodland ; while the barn, crib, cow-housing, ricks, racks, styes, with all the neat and substantial barn-yard appointments which flanked it, spoke of thrifty abundance of worldly goods, and of sterling, honest, contented independence. All within and without was quiet ; the bright, clean little kitchen stood open, and the morning sunshine streamed in at the door, but there was no sound save the rustling of the leaves on the great walnut tree which stretched its old arms above it. The windows stood partially open, and the green paper curtains, rolled neatly down to meet the partition in the sash, mellowed the glare of light, while the white muslin drawn across the lower division, gently waved its snowy folds as the light breeze crept in. Ailsie Austin, the mistress of this snug sylvan home, was gliding noiselessly about her usual domestic employments, stepping in and out from pantry to kitchen, as she skimmed the thick golden cream from her brimming pans, and poured their despoiled contents into the receptacle prepared for them. Her dress of black and white calico, with the simple strand of black ribbon pinned round her neck, told of recent bereavement ; and her sad, pale face, and frequent long drawn sigh said how much she still suffered. The dark wing of the Angel of Death had swept over the roof, and the house was still wrapped in that peculiar stillness which always follows and sleeps in its shadow. But a bounding step now rung on the threshold, and Steenie, the light, curly headed boy, followed quick on the sound.

“Mother,” said he, throwing down his hat and emptying his apron of the violets he had been gathering—“Mother, father is bringing up the horses ; don’t you hope he is going to Gosport ?”

"I do, Steenie, if he thinks it is best, but I am afraid he wont have time enough to go comfortably."

Isaac Austin's house stood a considerable distance from the high road which led to the bayside, and was approached by an avenue lined with fruit trees, cut through the forest trees within his own inclosures. Along this he came, leading his horses, fresh from their pasture.

"I've brought up the horses, Ailsie," said he, addressing his wife.

"I see you have ; you wont go on the bay, then ?"

"No ; the gentlemen from town called to me as I was fencing, over in high way lot, to say they could not go out fishing to day. The lady was taken suddenly ill in the carriage a little way back ; she was lying back on the seat as white as a sheet, poor thing. They've drove on to the Colonel's, to wait for her to revive a little. The poor little fellow has changed amazingly since he was down last week—it made my heart ache to see him. Well, I believe, Ailsie," said he, looking up a little dubiously at the sun, "I believe I'd better go to Gosport."

"It is late in the day, I'm afraid, Isaac, to go so far."

"Well, yes, 'tis rather late, but the days are long, and it is not very hot—the horses are able and fresh. I guess I'll go."

There was a painful thought stirring at the heart of both, to which neither gave utterance, but both kept busy with the needful preparations, and tried to speak cheerfully for the support of the other. But it would not do, and the tears began to roll in big drops down the cheeks of the wife ; but she walked quietly into her little bed-room and wiped them away. With one brief prayer for composure, she returned to her occupation, and set out her table to

prepare her hurried dinner, while her husband made ready his wagon, and collected the articles which he designed for market.

"You must tell me what you want, Ailsie, and don't forget anything, for it will be some time before I go again."

"I don't want anything myself, but don't forget the cloth for the boys' fall jackets; the tailoress can come next week to make them. I can't be about to attend to it just when they are needed, if I am spared to be here at all; for you know, Austin, what must be before then."

"Better two more than one less, Ailsie," replied Austin, with an unsuccessful attempt to speak cheerfully; for the thought suggested by the unlucky expression was a bitter one, and perhaps reminded his pale wife of another want, for she spoke abruptly:

"I had liked to have forgot—I wish you would bring me some broad, black ribbon, for the boys' Sunday hats. We have not been mentioned, you know," continued she, struggling for composure; then resuming sadly,—“if it is not done next Sunday, I don't know when it will be,” and the tears flowed now without any attempt to restrain them.

Ah, that good, old, time-honored custom, sanctified and sanctioned by those long gone before them, of coming, in the deep sorrow of trusting faith, to the house of God, and asking, openly and in their own names, the prayers of His people for a blessing on the grief that is crushing them. How could they dream of neglecting it? They could not, of course. It was the last sad duty attendant on loss of kindred, which they had to perform.

"I got down the boat this morning before I went to work, so as to have all ready in case they come; she wont

take any hurt if I let her lie till evening. Another thing, —the blanket you gave me to cushion the seat for the sick boy, somehow got dragged in the water, and I left it spread out on the thwarts to dry : you may as well send Jim after it, when he gets home from school. I don't like leaving you here alone, Ailsie ; shan't I stop and send Jim home as I go along, or some of the folks from Belden's ?" asked Austin, affectionately.

"No," replied Ailsie, "I don't mind being alone, now-a-days."

There was not much in the words, but they conveyed a world of meaning to the heart that ached in unison with hers. So he got into his wagon, and silently gathered up the reins.

"Father, father ! bring me a knife ?" shouted Steenie from the fence, through which he was watching the proceedings.

"Oh, I don't know, Steenie, knives don't grow in the lots."

"But potatoes do, and they'll buy one. Bring me a knife," repeated Steenie, resolutely.

"Well, well, we'll see. Be a good boy, Steenie, and take good care of mother." And Austin drove away.

He looked back as he passed through the gate communicating with the highway, and thought of the golden-haired girl, (his only one,) who, when he went last the same weary way, had rode down with him, to open the gate and close it again after him. There was none to witness his tears now, but He who alone could dry them ; and the strong man bent himself down in his grief, and the tears came thick and blinding. He paused a brief space to give his heart relief, then closed the gate himself, and went calmly on his way.

Ailsie sat down with her elbow in the sill of the window, but the prospect before her was not one to soothe or cheer her just then. At a short distance from the house lay the little picketed inclosure, within which slept the races which had preceded them. Under the drooping branches, which her own hands had planted to shelter it, gleamed the little white tablet which marked where the firstling of their flock, in its early infancy, had been laid to rest, and by its side the newly cut turf of another mound spoke of a fresher sorrow.

"Steenie, Steenie, you must not have that ; you will spoil it."

Steenie sat on the floor amusing himself with a pretty little accordion, the tones of which had aroused his mother from her painful reverie.

"Jim said I might play on it," cried Steenie, resolutely withholding the toy.

"But he only lent it to you, Steenie. It is very naughty to cry because I take it away. You know, Steenie, mother don't let you have anything if you cry for it."

Steenie dried his tears with his apron, and sought his amusement elsewhere. Ailsie was alone in her little bedroom, and her heart was full. She drew a low seat to the side of the bed, and leaning her forehead against the pillow, she let the long pent up sorrow have way. Long and bitterly she wept : but there was no murmuring mingled with her grief, for she was a devout and adoring believer, and though wanting in that stern, martyr-like spirit which was the characterizing trait in her husband's religious faith, she bowed to the hand that had afflicted, with childlike unquestioning submission.

"Mother, mother," cried Steenie, with a gleeful happy

tone, "my corn has spindled," and he rushed into the room. But the bounding step was stayed; the merry laugh was hushed; he heard his mother's sobs, and, child as he was, he comprehended it all. Silently advancing to her side, he passed his little arm caressingly over her shoulder, and laid his glowing cheek to hers. The mother drew him to her bosom, and her tears fell thick and fast over the clustering locks of the boy.

"Mother," said he at length, "did not you want God should have our Lucy?"

"Oh, Steenie," groaned the mother.

"Did He only lend her to you, mother? and will He say you are naughty to cry because He's takened her away?"

Alas, for the wavering mother! how soon and how reprovingly had her arguments recoiled upon her.

"Don't cry, mother. May-be God will let you have her again sometime, if you are good."

"No, Steenie, Lucy will never come back any more." And the mother gave way to a fresh burst of grief.

Steenie tried one more argument—"But, mother, did not father say you might go to her? Why don't you go?"

Ailsie rose instantly up, and taking the child by the hand, she went calmly forth to her household duties, saying to herself—

"I will not weep—why should I? Can I bring her back again? I shall go to her, but she shall not return to me."

After adjusting such little matters about the apartment as needed her care, Ailsie drew her little work-table to the window, and sat down to sew. Steenie went out to play and gather flowers in the yard. Presently he came in, and climbing on the back of his mother's chair, inserted a

bunch of pinks between the teeth of her comb, drawing the heads through the braids of her hair, saying as he finished—

“Let them be, mother—they look so pretty.”

Again the boy betook himself to his sports, and his mother went busily on with her work, sewing on the delicate snowy braid to the bright orange fabric which she was fashioning in tiny garments for the unborn wearer. A shadow darkened the doorway, and a trim, tidy-looking young girl entered the room.

“All alone, Aunt Ailsie? I thought you would be, and I ran down for that reason,” said the girl, depositing her neat sun-bonnet on the bed, and sitting down by her aunt.

“I am glad to see you, Anna, it is so still here. But you look pale, child; are you not well?” said Ailsie, anxiously, for Anna was the motherless child of a dear sister, and she felt a mother’s interest in all that affected her.

“Yes, I am very well, but we all have our troubles, and sometimes I fancy I have mine,” said she, sadly.

Attired in her neat gingham dress, with simple collar and wristbands of spotless linen, her hair parted plainly over her forehead, she could not be wholly unattractive, she was so perfectly neat in her person, and so unaffectingly simple in speech and manner. There was an air of frank, earnest truthfulness in her open, fearless gray eye, that redeemed the otherwise plain face, which, without any pretensions to beauty, was still pleasant and refreshing to look upon.

“Is everything pleasant at home, Anna? and do you get along pleasantly with father’s new wife?”

Ailsie could not comprehend what could be troubling her sensible, practical niece, unless it might be family jars, so she put her question at random.

"Yes, all is right at home. Mother is all that a step-mother can be, and she says I must have some nice new dresses, and go away and make a long visit. Pa says I must stay at home and keep occupied, and discharge all my duties cheerfully; and I think father's right: as though the heart would not ache just as much under a fine dress. It will ache in thinking anywhere and under any garment. I'd rather be at home."

"The heart-ache, dear child! what on earth has your heart got to ache about?" asked Ailsie, earnestly.

"Well, I did not tell you, aunt, because I thought such trouble as mine was so small, compared with yours, and I hated to plague you with it. Do you know that Harry Marvin has shipped for a three years' voyage, and will sail in a week or two?"

"Indeed, I did not, Anna. What has he done that for? He has a good trade, and a fine farm, and no earthly incumbrance. Why should he go to sea?"

"Why, you see, aunt, father says he must not come to see me any more, and the thing has been understood and encouraged so long, that to break it off now comes hard on us both. Father did not use to object; but this business about Montauk has made a great deal of bad feeling, you know; and, somehow, Harry got mixed up in it, without caring much about it at first, either; but when they began to grow in earnest about it, and make a great fuss, Harry is high-tempered and hasty, and he took sides against the proprietors, though he says he sees now that he was wrong, and went too far. But father can't get over it. He says it was an unprincipled, wicked undertaking, and he won't let me hold any such terms with anybody that had any hand in it. So that's all about it. I am troubled now, and disappointed, but I shall get over it in time."

"I dare say you will, Anna. Three years will soon pass away, and when he comes back it will all be put right. You will be your own mistress, then, Anna."

"There's time for a great many things to happen in three years, Aunt Ailsie; but I hope breaking the Fifth Commandment is not among the things that will happen to me. I shall obey my father—in my actions I certainly shall, and in my feelings as soon as I can; but you don't know, Aunt Ailsie, how it distresses me that I can't keep my thoughts away from it when I go to meeting. It is so long that I have been used to expecting Harry to come for me, and go home with me, that it don't seem like the same thing now; and I can't hear for thinking of it; and I can't sing, and Harry not holding the book; and it has taken the place of everything holy in my heart; and I am so bad and wicked, I can't keep it out of my prayers, even. Oh, Aunt Ailsie, that is the greatest trial of all."

"You must not feel so, Anna. It is not strange at all that you feel unhappy. It is very hard to break away from an attachment you have had strengthening in your heart for years. But, dear child, why should you seek to keep it out of your prayers? What should make the burden of our prayers, if not the sorrow with which our hearts are heavy. Where should we carry our troubles, if not to God? Oh, Anna, what should I do, if I could not do that. Be comforted, child. If there is anybody wicked in this thing, I don't think it is you," said Ailsie, who could not see as favorably for her sister's husband as for her sister's child.

"O, I don't blame father," interposed Anna. "I think, as things are, he is right. I would not think otherwise for the

world. I shall get along with it. I don't believe in dying for love, and never did. But I must go."

"Go?" said Ailsie; "why must you go so early? Stay and get tea, can't you?"

"No. I promised to go abroad with mother. She's worried and disturbed on my account. So I must go with her. Don't be fretting yourself about me. I ain't killed."

So, with a smile on her lip, and tears gathering in her eyes, the simple-minded, conscientious girl departed.

The long summer day was wearing toward mid-afternoon, and Jim came earlier than usual from school, bringing with him a school-mate some two or three years his senior—a good-natured, affectionate, but not very scrupulous boy, the grandson of not particularly reputable people, living at a short distance across the fields.

Jim came in to ask permission to go with Lyman Brown to pick blackberries in the field where the cows were at pasture. No objections being made, he took his basket to go, when Steenie came with eager petitions for leave to accompany him.

"Let him go, mother, wont you?" interceded Jim. "'Tain't far; and if he gets tired, Lyme and I can carry him, poor little pug. He's so lonesome here all day, with nobody to play with him."

There was force in Jim's argument, and Steenie was permitted to go; Jim being instructed to go to the boat and bring home the blanket. So they went laughing away, and the mother was left again alone with her busy remembrances.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ABSORBED in her own thoughts, Ailsie sat busily plying her needle, till the voice of the old clock in the corner warned her that it was time to rise, and prepare her evening meal, against the return of her husband and the young man who constituted "one of the family," though a hired laborer in the field. The sun was near its setting, when Sam Listen came in from the field, and quietly placing his hoe in its accustomed place, took the milk pails, and proceeded to the yard, from whence he immediately returned inquiring, with an air of vexation :

"What's the racket with Jim, that he hasn't fetched the cows at this time o' day?"

"Sure enough! why it's time long ago, but I didn't think of it. They went away, Jim and Steenie, with Lyme Brown, for there's a lecture in the school-house, and they were home early. They were going blackberrying, but only in north-pasture lot, and they ought to have been home a good spell ago. And, I forgot, I did tell Jim to go to the boat, and bring home the blanket his father carried down this morning."

"They were going to the boat, hey?" exclaimed Sam, hastily catching up his hat, which he had flung down on his entrance, behind the door.

"You don't think they would get into any danger, Sam?" the first feeling of alarm now awakened in her heart.

"They'd get into anything, if Beech Brown was with them. I'll go and fetch the cows, and while I'm so near I'll go on to Dick's, and hurry home the boys. I dare say they are there."

Sam started off with more anxiety than he cared to betray, and the mother went on with her work, uneasy a little, but not distressed.

Sam proceeded to the pasture; the cows were lowing at the bars, but the boys were not there.

"I thought so," said Sam to himself, as he dropped the bars for the gentle, timid creatures to pass through; but he had no time to give them the accustomed pat between the horns, or to meet the mute look of recognition which greeted the familiar hand that milked and tended them, from those great melancholy eyes; so he replaced the bars hurriedly, and ran on.

The outside door of Dick Brown's little weather-stained dwelling as usual stood wide open, swung back on its hinges against the front of the house; so Sam stepped in.

A snuffling, drawling, sleepy voice greeted him with:

"'S that you, Dick? hev you got the gin?"

"No, no, 'taint Dick, nor gin. What! over the bay, Judy?"

"La! you, Sam! No, I aint over no bay; but Mary, she's bin a baking, and I sot out to kinder give her a lift, and I got sorter overdid, so I thought I'd jest lop down, and take a bit of a cat-nap,—oh, sudsy me!"

"Well, well, Judy, never mind that,—where's Beech?"

"What do you want on him?"

"Nothing, but to know where he is. Can you tell anything about him?"

"I guess he aint fud off, for I told him not to go no var-sal wheres ; I guess I kin raise him."

"When was he here ? how long ago ?"

"Well, you see, I've kinder been in a doze, and I've lost the run o' time," said Judy, rolling herself up on the bed, and beginning to make clumsy efforts to rise.

With some exertion, she got her short, bloated limbs over the side of the bed, and began to introduce her feet, resembling the oblong bran cushions with which tasteful housekeepers are wont to decorate their dressing tables, into a pair of huge list slippers, turned in and trod down at the heel, to facilitate the process, proceeding at the same time to pin up her dress, ejecting pin after pin at the corner of her mouth, in a manner not to be attempted by the uninitiated.

This business effected, Judy lifted her huge body, and, with the assistance of chairs and table, hitched it along to the door ; then filling her lungs to their utmost capacity, she sent forth the call, "Lyman Beecher," holding on to the last syllable with a long quavering trill, which "Jenny" would have tried in vain to equal ; but the echoes died away over wood and water, and no answering shout revealed his whereabouts. Again she sent forth the summons, but with no better success.

"That'll do, Judy, that'll do ; such a yell as that might scare up old priest Beecher, from Boston ; and it will be long enough before you'll see another scale, if he once gets his hook in the bay."

"Ah," said Judy, sagaciously rolling her head, "I know him of old—he was death on fish and clams ; our Lyme never'll hold a candle to him for that. But I wish Lyme was here, for the old man's gone to town, and he gen'ly

comes home sort o' so-so. Lyme need to be here to on-tackle the mare."

"Well, I'll go to the shore. If the boys come, Judy, do send them home; for it's late, and their mother will be uneasy."

Sam started off on the run, and a few minutes brought him to the place where Isaac Austin had built his snug boat-house. Neither boat nor boys were there. The boat-house was open, and all the oars were in their places, but no vestige of the boat. The empty baskets were hung on the water fence, giving evidence that they had come first to the shore, and had been some hours there.

Sam strained his eager eyes over the bay, but darkness was on the waters, and he could see but a short distance. Sam was horror-struck,—but there was no time to waste in conjectures; so he ran back, even faster than he came down, and passing through the room in which Judy was again dozing, he opened the door of the back apartment. The supper was waiting Dick's arrival, and a pleasant, rosy looking girl was winding yarn from two chairs, which she had placed in the doorway for the benefit of the fading light, singing, the while, in a clear, strong, but uncultivated voice, a favorite Methodist hymn.

"Oh, there'll be mourning, mourning, mourning," rose loud on Sam's ears as he stepped in, pale and breathless, with terror and speed.

"Oh, Mary! I wish you had been singing anything but that; it sounds awful now," said Sam, dropping on a chair, and wiping the heavy perspiration from his brow.

"What has come over you. What is the matter, Sam?" said Mary, dropping her ball, which rolled unheeded out of the door. Sam's tale was soon told, poor Mary listening in heart-struck dismay, and asking, as he ended:

"What has become of them, Sam?"

"The Lord knows, Mary, I don't. Sunk in deep water I'm afraid."

Mary covered her face with her hands, and groaned.

"I hate to leave you, Mary; but Miss Austin's all stark living alone, and I must go back. What will you do, Mary, and Granny so bad off? but I *must* go."

"Run up to the Deacon's, Sam; you will find Anna and her mother there, and they will go to Ailsie's."

"And you, Mary?"

"Go, Sam, do. I can take care of myself till Granfer comes."

"And he'll come in no way to be any company or comfort for you, Mary."

"Never mind me, Sam. I am used to it."

So Sam ran off again, and soon told his sad errand to the little party at the Deacon's. Without a question or a word Anna flew rapidly along the fields, and soon reached the residence she had left so recently, fancying that she, too, knew something of trouble, but reproaching herself now that she could have repined.

Ailsie stood in the doorway, by this time trembling and fearfully alarmed. As Anna came up bare-headed and breathless, she exclaimed, in terror:

"What is it, Anna? Anna, what is it?"

Anna put her arm tenderly around her, and leading her back to the kitchen, placed her in a chair, and sat down beside her.

"Tell me, Anna, is it the boys? Is it Isaac? who? What is it? It is some terrible blow. Say, where does it fall?"

"Be composed, Aunt Ailsie. I hope we are scared without cause. I dare say they will be found safe," said Anna, expressing more courage than she felt.

"It's the boat," said Ailsie, springing up with a bound. "I see it all now! I remember how Sam started off when I mentioned it. And I sent them myself, my poor, precious boys."

Ailsie moved frantically about the apartment, wringing her hands in her despair, while Anna sought in vain to soothe or restrain her. Meanwhile Sam had rallied the neighbors, and men, women and children were hallooing in the woods, and shouting in all directions along the shore.

"Oh, mother, I am so glad you have come. Aunt Ailsie does take on so, I don't know what we shall do," said Anna, as her stepmother, Mrs. Belden, came in.

Mrs. Belden was an affectionate, kind-hearted woman—decided and self-relying, and holding great influence over her afflicted, unassuming kinswoman. She sat down, and persuading Ailsie to sit by her, she succeeded in some measure in calming and supporting her, using considerable prevarication, and twisting round truth more than her conscience would have sanctioned under other circumstances, in the hope of allaying the fearful agitation which was shaking the frame of the tortured woman.

"Why, you know, Ailsie, it is nothing uncommon for boys to go farther than they think for, or to take a wrong path, or miss their way in the woods."

"But the boat, Sally, the boat,—where is that?"

"Oh, I dare say it is safe. Lyme Brown can work a boat almost as well as Isaac. Don't give them up so easily," said the kind woman, without believing herself one word she was saying, for she knew they had neither paddle nor oar, and that Lyman, if he had hardihood in an emergency, had not skill. However, she comforted her listener as well as she could, and left the issue to time.

One after another the messengers returned with their disheartening report—"no trace of them." But Sam and Anna met them at the door, and sent them silently away, that Ailsie might not hear. Kind hands assisted Sam in the out-of-doors duties, and neighbors and friends awaited the arrival of Austin, to assist and relieve him of such cares as others might assume. Alas! who among them had power to lift the load from his heart?

Austin drew near his home, seeking to banish the sad recollections of his last return from a similar mission, by picturing to himself the sweet smiling faces and fond hearts that awaited him.

He smiled within himself, as he thought of the joy of Steenie over his bright new knife, and the calm satisfaction of Jim, as he cut the string which bound the pretty volumes he had so long coveted.

He wondered at the silence that hung so deep and solemn over his premises, and that Jim had not, as usual, in his impatience, stood at the ready-opened gate, to jump into the wagon and ride up with him.

But he drove on. An unaccustomed hand was at his horses' heads, and a distant neighbor silently took the reins from his hands. The outer door stood open, and many forms passed back and forth, as if busy in his home, while groups stood back in the shadow of the trees, as if in earnest and whispered discourse. What did it mean? What had called, at this hour, such a concourse of people about his secluded and quiet abode? He had but one thought—Ailsie was suddenly ill; but the looks which shrunk from meeting his, were not anxious, but despairing.

"Was she dead? Would nobody speak?"

Anna saw that the tale must be told, and, closing the door of the room in which Ailsie was sitting, she came forward tremblingly, extending her hand to meet him, bursting into floods of tears as she spoke :

"Oh, Uncle Austin !"

"What has happened, Annie ? I feel it is no small thing to call so many around us. Tell me, child ?"

"The boys, uncle,—the boat !"

"Gone ?" groaned Austin.

"Gone !" replied Anna.

"What !—both ?"

"Both, uncle."

"And Ailsie ?"

"Hoping still—not knowing the worst."

Isaac Austin staggered to a chair, and, placing both hands on the back, leaned heavily over it.

The struggle in that father's heart, man might not read ; but the aid he invoked in that bitter hour was not denied him. He silently listened to all that could be told him ; then, nerving himself to bear it, he quietly opened the door, passed into the inner room, and stood before his wife.

"Ailsie, we must bear it. It is hard—hard—but we must bear it."

"Isaac !—Isaac ! is there no hope ?—none ?—that you speak only of bearing. Is there no hope ?—no hope ?"

"None—none, Ailsie, but in God."

Ailsie rose, and advanced towards her husband.

"Do you say, Isaac Austin, that we must submit to this, when God *can* help, if He *would* ?"

The words were spoken with stern, wild energy. Then Ailsie sat down in her chair, and was still.

It was nine o'clock. The moon had risen an hour ago, and the dwellers along the shore had manned a boat and rowed about the still waters of the bay, but not a token was found to guide them; and still they pulled the oars, and looked hopelessly for the mourned and missing boys.

Isaac Austin paced the room in silence, till Anna laid her hand on his arm, and called his attention to Ailsie. He turned in his walk and looked on his wife; then called, in his alarm, as he bent over her, "Ailsie!—Ailsie!"

A choking sob rose in her throat, but she did not reply. A new terror had grappled his heart-strings.

"Was this, indeed, so? Was the fire on his hearth to be utterly quenched? Was the light of his household to be wholly extinguished?"

This was no overwrought hysterical affection. Ailsie was not constituted, mentally or physically, for high nervous excitement. She was made for calm, passive, patient endurance. What, then, was this? Was it death?

She was still and cold; her eye fixed and staring, yet retaining her consciousness of suffering. The big drops of agony stood on her death-cold brow; her very heart-strings straitened under the grasp of a sorrow too mighty for emotion.

Isaac Austin dropped on his knees before his wife, and took her cold hands in his, while his words came forth weakly and brokenly:

"If it be possible, O Father, let this cup pass from me. Nevertheless——"

He stopped. Could he—he, the man whose determined unflinching trust had never been shaken—who, with and sustaining faith of the prophets of old, had promises—could he now, "nevertheless"—

Again! Could he—he who, the chosen mouth-piece in their little neighborhood conventicles, could cry mightily unto the Lord, and who, with the fervid outpourings of importunate pleadings, like Jacob, had wrestled with God—could he say it now—“ ‘Nevertheless, not my will but thine be done?’ ‘Have I received good at the hands of the Lord, and shall I not receive evil also? That which Thou hast lent to me, shall I not restore it? When Thou askest that which Thou gavest me, shall I not render back again the things which are thine own?’ Yet, O Father! for His sake, who, in His superhuman agony, sent up from the cross that terrible cry, ‘Eli, Eli, Lama, Sabacthani!’ have mercy!—have mercy! If it be possible!—oh, if it be possible, let me not taste this bitter cup! ‘Nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done.’ ”

Yes, he could, and he did say it, and honestly and devoutly he felt and he meant it. Though the feelings of the father were rising and striving, with their whelming waves, to drown out the faith of the Christian, even now, in the o’ermastering agony of an hour like this, when his heart was quivering in every fibre, from the wrench that had riven it, he could say, weakly and tremblingly, it is true, but humbly and trustingly still, “Thy will be done.”

Isaac Austin rose from his kneeling posture, his swart brow streaming with the dews wrung from his heart’s agony, and the heavy masses of his coal black hair hanging damp and disordered over it. There was anguish in his writhing features as his glance fell on his wife, but he had laid her, in her helplessness, in the arms of her Maker. He had committed her to the keeping of God. Could he do aught more?

Meanwhile, busy hands were applying restoratives, bathing the head, and chafing the cold, helpless hands, in doing which Anna loosened the tresses of her long, dark hair, and the flowers which Steenie had so lovingly twined among the braids fell into her lap. It was done. The master-chord was touched, the torturing tension about the heart gave way, the rigid muscles relaxed, the strained and stiffened eye-lid drooped heavily, and tears, blessed, relieving tears, gushed soothingly over the burning balls, and she moaned.

“ Oh, they were Steenie’s flowers!—they were Steenie’s flowers!” as her hand grasped the sweet floral keys which had unlocked the flood-gates of sorrow in his poor mother’s heart, and let the pent waters have way.

“ It was Steenie’s blessed little hand that put them there, Isaac. Oh, where is that little hand now? And Jim, too, my kind, noble, affectionate Jim, shall I see him no more? Both gone!—both gone, under the cold waters! These dear little heads!—must I submit and be still? Will nobody help—help—help?” shrieked the desolate mother, as she rushed recklessly out into the soft, still night, and screamed forth the names of her boys.

It was useless to talk to her. What could they say? Who could stand calmly talking of patience, and duty, and submission, in cold, measured, cant terms, to an agonized mother stripped of her all?

“ Let her have her way, Isaac,” said Mrs. Belden. “ It is not in human nature to stand such a blow as this. Let her exhaust herself; it is better so.”

Anna clung to her Aunt, and soon she flew frantically back, and, casting herself into her bed, clasped her hands forcibly over her brow, as if she would crush out memory

and life. Then all the events of the afternoon came back upon her thoughts, with softening, quieting influences; and, calling her husband to her bed-side, she repeated, amid suffocating sobs, the sweet, innocent prattle of her boy.

"It is right," said Austin, solemnly: "it is all right, Ailsie. Can't you say with me now, 'Thy will be done?'"

"Not yet—not yet. Don't ask me. I can't. Give me time, Isaac—give me time. Let the mother have way in my heart now. Let me mourn, and refuse to be comforted; let me weep and be wicked, if I will. I can't say it yet. I can't mock my Maker with words, while my spirit rebels. I can't be submissive. I am not resigned. I must murmur and mourn, for I am childless."

"For the sake of that unborn blessing, Ailsie, you will try to be composed."

"Don't talk of it—don't think of it;—another to be taken away—another to love but to lose. Oh! there is no comfort in that thought."

So Ailsie talked down her fearful and frenzied excitement, and the night dragged wearily on.

"Has anybody been over to Dick's?" asked Mrs. Belden. "It would be hard to let them be left alone at such a time. Poor Lyme was a well-meaning, good-hearted, rattle-headed boy."

"Yes, mother," replied Anna. "Sam went over early, and he did not come back. They went over from the Colonel's, and Mrs. Preston called here, just now, on her way home. She said Mary was almost distracted; but Dick and Judy were too stupid to-night to know much about it. They will suffer, I guess, when they wake up

sober, for they were very fond of Lyme, in their way. But there is little trouble with them that rum wont comfort."

The voice of prayer, in broken accents, went up under that desolate roof; the wailing cry of the broken-hearted mother was hushed as she listened, and the night wore away.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE little party were cordially welcomed at the pleasant mansion of Col. Preston, the "Patroon" of that region. Ada, drooping and trembling, was conducted immediately to a couch in a private apartment, and every attention which intelligent and delicate kindness could prompt, was unremittingly rendered, by her affectionate and gentle hostess; but Ada closed her eyes, and turned away her head, in timid and tearful rejection of all proffered restoratives, pleading the while in low, faint tones:

"All I want, Walter, is perfect quiet; let me be alone—all alone. Don't disturb yourself, Mrs. Preston—I am often so. Leave me to myself, and I shall overcome it by degrees."

Left to herself, Ada wrung her hands in silent despair, locking them in rigid clasps and lifting them high, as if she would reach relief from above; then pressing them tightly over her eyes, and pale, cold brow, as if she sought to shut out light from her eyes, and maddening thought from her brain—she almost held her breath, in the intensity of her struggle to command herself, and compel back composure.

Col. Preston hospitably devoted himself to the entertainment and amusement of his guests, committing Ernest and Allen to the attentions of his son, a pleasant boy of

their own age, who gleefully bent himself to the task of seeking sports and toys for their benefit. But Ernest was too languid to join with much spirit in the amusements offered him. He was disappointed, alarmed at his mother's continued illness, fatigued with the protracted ride, and wearied and overtaken with his efforts to meet with corresponding interest the cordial civilities and kindnesses of his assiduous little entertainer.

"Come, Ernest," said Allen, who saw that his cherished companion was drooping, "you shall sit in this big chair and let me rock you; you can shut your eyes, and just fancy it is the boat."

Ernest acquiesced. They placed him carefully among the cushions, and softly swung the chair on its nicely balanced rockers. The aching little head drooped, the weary eye closed, and the pale, exhausted boy, rested in sweet, refreshing slumber.

Allen and Henry sat holding whispering discourse, while they kept the great chair cradle in motion; and Mrs. Preston, who had come on stealthy tiptoe-step into the room, stood silently contemplating the wan face of the sleeping boy, when Evelyn and Col. Preston entered from their walk to the shore. She turned her tearful eyes and met the melancholy look of Evelyn. Silently wringing the hand he extended to her, she hastily left the apartment. There was no need of words; he understood the import of that kind pressure, and his eyes filled as he advanced and bent over the chair.

"Go out and seek air and amusement, my kind little fellows, and let me sit here," said Evelyn.

The boys rose at once, for they knew it was his wish, and left him with his hand on the chair.

Col Preston went out to give some necessary directions to his laborers, who were going out to their afternoon's work in the fields; and the sad father sat alone, silently watching by his child.

Presently he opened his meek eyes, and looked smilingly up at his father.

"Have I slept long?" he asked, "and where are the boys?"

"They have just gone out; down to the shore, perhaps."

"Oh, I am so glad they have: it was too bad to keep them here with such a stupid, sleepy fellow as I am. Does it look pleasant on the water to-day, papa?"

"It does: very. Would you like to drive down after dinner?"

"I am so tired," said Ernest, making an effort to shake off his languor and rise. "Yes—I should like to look at the beautiful, bright blue bay just once more."

He paused, and Evelyn's heart stood still in the pang of surprise at his words.

"I don't think I shall come fishing on the bay any more, papa. I thought this would be the last time, when I came before. I was so glad mother would come once."

What could that devoted father say to the calm communication of his child? He could not contradict the convictions of the boy: how could he bear to confirm to Ernest or himself their hopeless reality?

"Why did you think so, my son?" he asked.

"Because, papa, I knew just how much less I could do the last time, than I could the time before; and I see how little, how much less than then, I can do now?"

He held up his little white hand, almost transparent in its delicate tenuity:

"I don't think, papa, this would haul in just the littlest bit of a fish, not even dear little Steenie's 'baby porgy,'" said he, smiling cheerfully.

The boys came in at that moment, bringing the shells they had collected on the shore, and Ernest turned, in pleased interest, to examine and admire them, while Evelyn, solemn and sad, but calm, sought Ada in her retirement. She was still on the couch, but declined making any effort to rise.

"I am anxious, on Ernest's account, to get home before night. I hope you will be able to go soon, Ada, will you not?"

Ada shook her head, but gave no encouragement that she would exert herself, and made no inquiries after Ernest.

"How could she forget her child? How could she be so thoughtlessly selfish?" said he to himself, as he returned to watch, with redoubled tenderness, by Ernest. "Yet, on the whole, perhaps it is best as it is. I should not like just now to tell her, what, if she had inquired, I should not have felt it right to withhold from her. Let me drink the cup presented to me, as it is mixed; it is not all bitter—thank God, it is not all bitter."

The languor of first awakening over, Ernest was invigorated by his long sleep, and entered cheerfully into the quiet amusements got up to cheer and please him. The day wore away tediously to Evelyn, for he felt disturbed at having Ernest so long excited by his efforts to keep up, and fearful of the effects of exposure at evening; but Ada, though decidedly improved and renovated in strength, declined making any preparations to leave. At length the day was nearly at an end, and she inquired,

"Will it be quite dark by the time we get into the street, Walter?"

"I fear it will. Do you feel able to go now? It is time, quite time we were off."

Ada looked out and saw that the sun was near its setting, and with an amazing accession of strength, she began with alacrity to robe herself for her ride.

Few were the words of parting compliments, for Evelyn's heart was too full for speech, and well did his kind entertainers read it. A brief word of thanks, and an expressive clasp of the hand, told all he had to say.

"Come and see us again, Ernest," said Mrs. Preston, as her young guest, carefully wrapped in his cloak and shawl, was lifted into the carriage.

"Papa will come again, one of these days," answered the boy evasively; and the hospitable roof of Col. Preston was soon far behind them.

"I should like to stop a minute at Austin's. I wish to say to him, that we shall not come down again this week."

The driver reined in his horses at the gate, opening upon Austin's premises.

"Shall I run down to the house and tell him?" asked Allen.

"Drive to the house, will you, papa? I should like to bid Jim and dear little Steenie good-bye—good night, I mean," said Ernest, with considerate tenderness, recalling the form of expression which he knew conveyed a painful meaning to his father.

"Nonsense, Ernest, it is late, and I am cold," said Ada, peevishly.

"Let the gate open if you please, Allen, and get in; we will drive to the house."

Evelyn did not regard Ada's objection : it was late for her to be in haste now.

They had not driven far on the road, winding toward the house, before they met Sam Listen running at the top of his speed. His tale of sorrow was told with breathless, broken brevity ; every word of its startling import falling with terrible force upon the stricken heart of Ernest.

"Oh, papa—oh, papa," he sobbed out in almost suffocating emotion, "oh, papa—if it had not been for us!—if we had only gone—or said nothing about going! What shall we do? Oh, papa, what shall we do?"

"We can do nothing, my dear son ; but you have no cause to reproach yourself—it was no fault of yours."

"I might have been contented at home ; it was not necessary to turn so many people out of their way that I might be amused. I see now how selfish I was. Oh, why did not I think of this sooner."

The shocked and sensitive boy wept and sobbed till he was wholly exhausted, and lay panting and weary in the arms of his father. Silent and pale, the little party entered the house, on their arrival home, where the tea-table in the dining-room, and the blazing fire in the kitchen, awaited them. Allen preceded Evelyn, bearing Ernest in his arms, direct to the fire.

"We began to be anxious," said Alice, as they entered. What made you so late? What has happened? What is the meaning of your sad, pale face, Allen?"

Allen burst into tears, and gave the question of Alice no answer ; but Col. Hesselten, who had been some hours impatiently watching their arrival, had gathered, from the driver, all that was known of the distressing affair.

Ada had taken a light and gone at once to her room,

manifesting no sympathy with Ernest's sufferings or anxiety with regard to his health. Carefully removing his wrappers, and placing him tenderly in the great lounging chair by the fire, Evelyn left Ernest to the care of his friends, and went to look after the comfort of Ada. He found her cowering in her room, shivering with agitation and cold, but obstinately refusing to go down to the fire; burying her face in the folds of her shawl, she exclaimed, sorrowfully :

"This is my doing. It is all my doing; and my intentions were kind. I thought to gratify Ernest, but everything is blighted that I touch. All innocent things wither before me—there is a curse upon all connected with me."

"Ada, this is wilful folly. Why will you add to the deep wretchedness of this thing, by this ill-timed violence? You are shaking with cold. Cheer up, Ada, and come to the fire—come with me, do."

He took her arm to lead her down, but she broke from him exclaiming, wildly :

"Away with you, Walter Evelyn, touch me not. I am desperate. I will meet no eye again!"

Evelyn regarded her a moment in utter bewilderment. He was stunned by her wild violence. At length he approached her with perfect calmness, and laying his hand upon her shoulder, he looked sternly in her eye, as he said, deliberately and without passion :

"Ada, there must be an end of this : while Ernest lives I will bear it. For his sake I will submit patiently to all that you so mercilessly inflict. When his blessed little head is laid in the grave, if I can see it and live, then, Ada, there must be a reckoning, fearful and final between us."

Ada was calm and submissive.

"I will go down, Walter ; I will do anything you ask. I will humble myself in the dust at your feet—anything, everything unflinchingly, but have your displeasure. Let me go down and see Ernest ; how could I forget him ? Forgive me, Walter, I almost forgot his existence."

"There was little need that you should tell me, Ada, for my heart ached for the dying child, forgot in your unmotherly selfishness. It did not escape me, for I am painfully sensitive for him. If it escaped his notice, it is of little moment to me now."

Evelyn turned to go, but Ada clung to him.

"Take me with you, Walter ; let me go to my child."

"If you can compose yourself, and not distress Ernest with your hysterical folly. Not otherwise."

"You are unjust, Walter. I am not hysterical ; it was but the sudden caving in of a false, hollow heart."

Evelyn turned upon her a sharp, searching glance, before which her eye quailed.

"No more of this—if you go with me, remember."

Shrinking at his stern words, she accompanied him down stairs, and sat down with a pale face, and tears in her soft loving eyes, by the side of her child.

"Poor, dear mother, how pale you look," said the gentle boy, leaning his head on her shoulder, while the big tears rolled down his cheek. "This is a dreadful thing to meet, mother. I can't help thinking as if I had been to blame, though I hope I have not. I could not help it, mother—I could not help it, dear mother, could I?"

"You could not, indeed, my precious child ; don't distress yourself with such a thought. I am the cause if any one. But for me, you would have gone through with your plans. Be pacified, Ernest, I will bear all the blame."

Ada spoke soothingly and tenderly, as she caressed her child ; all the passionate violence of her manner disappearing before the touching sorrow of the boy. Composed, and partially consoled, Ernest was taken to his bed. But the shock had been too severe for his enfeebled frame—he was feverish and restless ; and if for a brief period sleep visited his pillow, it was but to bring dreams of terror and trouble.

With the earliest dawn, Evelyn went out to seek intelligence ; but none had been gained, and he returned disheartened that he could bring no relief to his suffering child.

“ Evelyn,” said Ada, “ look at this.”

They were sitting beside Ernest in the early morning, watching the first calm slumber as it fell over him. Ada handed to her husband the crumpled fragment of newspaper which had caused so much emotion the preceding day, and led by a concurrence of consequent circumstances to so much suffering. She pointed to a paragraph announcing arrivals at a fashionable hotel, and Evelyn read :

“ Rev. Ernest Atherton and daughter, England.”

“ Is it possible, Ada, that so common-place a thing as that has power to agitate you so excessively ? What is there so terrible in all this ? The notice itself should put you at rest. It seems he is not pining in loneliness ; he has found another love, for, do you not see, he is accompanied by a daughter ? I should think it would be pleasant, after such a length of years, to meet the companion and friend of your early life.”

“ Not for all this earth contains, Walter ; I would sooner die. Where, where shall I hide myself now ?”

"Was it this, then, that influenced your strange conduct yesterday?—this ridiculous whim, that induced you to delay our return till dark, exposing our child to the chill evening damps? Can it be this silly fear of a shadow, and that your own cousin—the adopted brother of your childhood—that keeps you skulking almost from the light of day? I cannot comprehend it."

Ada was silent. Suddenly, Evelyn spoke, as if an unpleasant thought had suggested itself. "Ada—tell me—did you make a grand mistake when you suffered me to keep what the waves had thrown to my care? Is this early love still sinfully cherished in your heart, that you so dread to meet its object?"

The lips of the speaker quivered, and his eye gleamed with unwonted fire. A new sting was planted in his heart to tire and torture him.

"You are cruel, Walter. You are not cruel only—you are unjust. I will not waste words in the denial of so baseless a charge. Whatever other sins I may have committed, my heart never harbored one thought that dishonored you. I cannot stoop to repel such an accusation."

"Be easy, then, and dismiss your unfounded fears. Since you so dread this meeting, you are little likely to be exposed to it. There is nothing in Sea-spray to attract travelers from abroad. He will probably take the fashionable thoroughfares; visit the great points of attraction, and return in a month or so. For myself, I should rather like to meet him."

Ada made no reply, and the subject hitherto so carefully avoided between them, was suffered to drop. Ernest awoke refreshed, and went down with his father to breakfast; soon after which, Mr. Alden called at the door, in his carriage,

saying to Evelyn—"I think I shall drive down and see the Austins. Will you take a seat with me?"

Evelyn, at Ernest's entreaty, accepted the invitation; and they drove off, on the road he had traveled so often recently, with solemn and painful reflections in their minds, affording subjects for much grave and anxious discourse.

CHAPTER XX.

THE blue smoke curled up among the trees that hung their sheltering boughs over the roof of Isaac Austin, rising in tapering and twisting spires, on the calm dewy air, when the first golden gleamings of dawn began to paint the horizon, on that desolate morrow which broke on a childless home.

Sam Listen had returned before the dawn, from his mission of love to the humble roof, which, low and obscure as it was, was yet not too low for the entrance of sorrow, nor too humble to be the abode of all the holy and gentle affections which God has given to gladden the human heart, and which live in the glow of the meanest, poorest hearths, and smile round the boards of the lowliest of humble homes. He had kindled the fire, hung on the kettle for breakfast, and taken a long, hopeless stroll along shore, but vestige or sign there was none, and he had returned to attend, with faithful, affectionate thoughtfulness, to duties which, even in sickness, sorrow, and death, can never be remitted.

The little family were early astir. Sleep had found no resting-place on their lids, for sorrow and suspense had kept their unceasing watch, "enduring the night-time;" but joy had not "come with the morning."

Isaac Austin stepped into his pleasant little kitchen, with a calm, pale face. There was no change there ; everything looked as it looked every morning at that early hour, before the boys were awake, or the business of the day began. He looked around on the silent objects, scarcely discernible in the gleaming fire-light.

Oh, how everything had a voice, ringing loud in his aching heart ? Here lay Jim's books, as he brought them in from school, the strap still buckled around them ; there was Steenie's little wagon, with yesterday's gathering of violets yet fresh within it ; here stood Jim's bat ; yonder lay his ball, his top, and Steenie's little whip, the apron last taken off, the worn shoes, replaced by stouter ones when he went out yesterday. The father bent over them, almost fancying the warmth of the little feet still lingering there. It was too much !—too much ! Feeling, deep, strong, agonizing, broke over all the restraints of self-imposed fortitude, and the strong, stern man bent, and swayed, and sobbed, with moanings and blistering tears, over the little shoe of his loved, lost boy. He laid his hand on the buckled strap of Jim's school-books, his broad breast heaving with convulsive throes, and he remembered only that he was a man and a father. But Ailsie was moving in her bed-room. He must nerve himself to meet this. Should he remove these memorials of her boys ? Should he put them away out of her sight, that they might not overpower her, as they had him ? A wrenching pang was screwing his heart. They were where their own little hands had placed them. They were hallowed to his feelings by their touch. Where they had laid them they must remain. From the places which that last act of their lives had consecrated, how could he so soon depose them ?

He could not. It would be useless. Were not their images everywhere?—their presence over everything?—their sweet faces looking out from every corner?—their glad voices and bounding steps echoing in every sound? Ailsie came out. She made no outcry—no loud lamentations; but she could not be still. She paced restlessly from room to room, over the house, and around it, listening to every sound—starting, waiting, watching, dreading, but not hoping, or only hoping one thing—that the sea would render back its dead, that she might have them—that she only might know where to weep over their graves—that she might yet be gathered beside them in the dust. But Ailsie did not forget that she was a wife, as well as a mother. She did not forget that the blow which had fallen with such benumbing force on the mother's heart, had left the father childless. Unlike Ada, she did not, in the hour of affliction, hug her own sorrow to her heart, and forget that it had sharers, while she thought only of its bearing on her own comforts. She was a devoted, true-hearted companion, adviser, and friend to her husband. There was no tinge of selfishness in her nature; but with pure singleness of purpose, she looked first to secure the happiness of those whose happiness was in any way entrusted to her keeping, holding herself of no account till others were cared for; and in nothing was she inconsistent, or untrue to her trust, now. *A*

Anna and her mother went quietly about, discharging the daily domestic duties. The table was set out in the usual place, and the breakfast silently prepared. Ailsie came in, and gave her attention to such little matters as needed thought, calmly telling her willing assistants where to find such articles as were required; quietly

gliding about, with that shrinking, shuddering, and putting off of the lonely meal, which they all understood and shared.

Sam came in, throwing down his hat, as usual, behind the door, eliciting a growl from Carlo, the faithful old house-dog, the playmate and companion of Steenie in his wanderings about the premises. Steenie's cap had fallen from the nook on which it had been hung, and Carlo was keeping watch beside it. With one paw extended over the cap, and his nose resting on his feet, he kept his gray eyes constantly turned towards the object of his care, suffering no one to approach or touch it.

Isaac Austin opened his Bible ; it was his invariable custom. Could its blessed teachings be dispensed with now ? With a trembling hand he turned the leaves, and selecting the 13th and 14th of Job, he read it falteringly and tremulously to the end. The accustomed morning hymn was attempted, Sam and Anna joining their voices ; but Ailsie could not sing, and Austin's voice gave forth one sad wail and ceased. The sweet voice of their lost Jim, yesterday morning, made glad music to their hearts, and Ailsie thought of the little form that always sat on her lap and mingled his childish tones with hers. " When I can read my title clear," was gone through with, for Sam and Anna were practised members of the little evening choir, and singing for her aunt was Anna's duty now ; she would have performed a more painful one as cheerfully. Then the pleading tones of prayer went up, low and solemn ; deeply, grandly impressive were the words, which, in the inspiration of heart-breaking grief, came kindling and glowing with the warmth of devotional feeling from the lips of that childless and stricken man. Oh, that [bitter, bitter drop

in the bitter cup of bereavement!—that insupportable draught, from which, knowing it *must* be tasted, the blenching lip draws back!—that terrible first meeting round the family board from which death has taken a member!—the unoccupied seat, the unfilled cup, the unneeded plate, the silence, the vacancy, the awe—how the heart sinks and shivers, and longs to break and be at rest!—and here, two vacant seats, two empty cups—two gone, to come no more! The caroling bird, the sunshine, the heart's dew of their happy home, silenced, shadowed, dried up! They must weep—weep and lament; they must, and they did.

The melancholy formality was over. The untasted breakfast was put by. Neighbors and friends thronged in to weep, to condole, to assist, but not one to speak of hope; even the confusion was relief—anything to break that intolerable stillness. At last came one, who carefully shadowed forth a possibility. It was kind, gentle-hearted “old uncle Lester Bennet,” who spoke some words for hope to grasp at; it might have been misjudging kindness, but he said:

“Law now, Ailsie, child, I haint gin ’em up; you see when I heard on’t last night, why I couldn’t sleep no-way I could fix it; so I sot down in the sill o’ the door, and I sot ter turnin’ on’t over kinder in my mind. It was as calm as a clock, and as clear as a kitten’s eye. Tha want northen on arth to hurt ’em, an them air tew oldest boys, they knowed enough ter keep her on an even keel and let her drift. I can’t larn, as the least arthful thing has druv ashore. Now it stands to reason, it’s jest as plain as preachin’ to me, child, that suthink anuther would a drifted along shore eff they’d a bin drowned, a hanker-

cher or their straw hats, or suthink ; but thain't nothink under the cope druv up; and its my idea ther' sartin would."

Ailsie caught at the straw the old man had pushed within her reach, and ran eagerly out to tell her new hope to her husband.

"I had thought of all that, Ailsie, but I knew how little reason there was to lean upon it, and I would not mention it to you. I did not think it right to tantalize you with hopes almost certain to be disappointed."

Ailsie returned the more depressed for her transient elation ; but the old boatman replied, persistingly :

"Never mind, Ailsie, put a leetle faith in the opinion of an old man, that knowed these waters afore Isaac Austin was born, and has pulled a boat over e'en most every inch on 'em. I know jest how the tide sot yesterday arternoon, and where the wind was, what leetle tha' was on't, all night, and eff they wan't skeered they was jest as safe as eff they'd bin ter hum. That air's a putty big boat, and as I telled my old woman, it would be seen a good ways off, eff they want seen from Montauk, or by any body 'long shore, ary one ; thar's allus boats cutting about, and the sound and the sea, for miles off the Pint, is chuck full o' smacks and all sorts o' craft. It's my mind them air leetle chaps'll turn up from somewhere's bym-by."

"I wish somebody would go to Montauk, and along the north shore, and look out," said Ailsie.

"La, bless your dear little soul, child, there's more'n a dozen mounted men bin on the move sence daylight. That air gentleman as Isaac took a fishin', and Mr. Welby ; why, they've shelled out their shiners like sand, and sent off boats from all pints. Eff money'll find 'em, they'll be

found. Well, child, the Lord be with you! He can comfort you when nobody else can't. I'll jog along over to poor Dick's, and see him and Judy a spell—poor creators."

"You had better come back here and get dinner, uncle Lester," said Ailsie, clinging desperately to the only friend who had cheered her heart with words of hope.

"Oh, 'taint no matter about dinner." But Ailsie urged.

"Well, I'll see, eff I aint tew tired. I dun no, I may fertiner." And the infirm old man "jogged along," leaning heavily on his long knotted sapling, denuded of its bark, and twisting naturally just a convenient turn for his hand.

He had scarcely left, when Mr. Alden came slowly driving up the approach, shrinking from the scene of distress, so painful to witness because he could not relieve. Isaac Austin was one of his most highly esteemed parishioners, and the lost boys were counted not the least precious among the baptized lambs of his flock.

Sam came out to groom the pastor's horse, his honest face working with the emotions he thought it not manly to display, and Evelyn followed his friend into the house.

Ailsie loved and revered her pastor—his last visits to her house had been in the time of deep affliction, but a few weeks back, to minister to her sorrow, and to bury her beautiful and only daughter, and she came forward to meet him with a burst of uncontrollable grief.

To Evelyn it was overwhelming: this meeting with the man who had spent so many happy days helping him to enliven and make pleasant the fleeting hours of his child. He could not help feeling painfully his agency in what had occurred, and voice and language failed him, when he met his proffered hand.

"Don't mention it, Mr. Evelyn," said Austin, in reply to his attempted expressions of self-accusation, "don't speak of it in that light, I have no such feeling. Put it away, it is wrong. I would not, if I could, see any hand but God's, in this, mine affliction."

"I am glad, truly glad, my dear friend, to find you and Mrs. Austin so composed. I did not expect it—I certainly did not expect it."

"It is a sore trial, Mr. Alden, it is hard to bear, and I feel that the spirit faints and the flesh is weak, but I hope we shall not be tempted to rebel. I hope we shall be enabled to be still, and have grace given us to kiss the rod; but,—but,—you have never lost a child, Mr. Alden."

"Never, blessed be His name! But I hope God has given me a heart to feel for those who have."

"I hope you will long be spared the lesson. I have been thinking that perhaps we needed it more than we thought for. I remember, and it seems strange to me now, that I should have felt so when I went to Gosport yesterday, and looking back from the gate, I saw the little graves in the corner, yonder, and not the little curly-head that looked after me from the fence. I turned back to weep for the child God had taken to be with Himself, and not to thank him for the bright, healthy, happy creatures he had left to be with me; and, when I came home my heart was heavy for the one that was not, instead of being lifted up in grateful acknowledgments for those that were spared. I see it all now. I feel how sinful I was in my yesterday's repinings, and I try, when I look upon what I have left, to moderate my grief, lest I be even more desolate to-morrow."

"But, my good friend, you must not be too severe in your self-judgment. God would not have given us these

strong human affections, if to cherish them, and to mourn their sundering, were sin. Remember—‘whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.’ ”

Austin bent his head in reply to his pastor’s remark; and he turned to address himself to Ailsie :

“I am comforted, Mrs. Austin, to see you so resigned—that you receive this chastening in so childlike and submissive a spirit.”

“You don’t understand me, Mr. Alden, if you think I am submissive,—I am not. I try to be still, and to endure patiently what I cannot alter. I may seem outwardly submissive, but my heart is all rebellion. I would heave the earth from its foundations to bring back my boys. I am not resigned, and I can’t hold my peace and have you think better of me than I deserve. I can’t let you believe what is not true.”

“Oh, Ailsie !” said Austin, “this is a stubborn spirit; you must try to bend it; you can have no peace till you do.”

“God forgive me, Isaac, I know it is. I don’t intend to indulge it; but I could not have Mr. Alden think I am resigned and patient, when I am not. Why should I seek to hide from man, what I cannot hide from man’s Maker ?”

Ailsie bowed herself down and wept, and there was no sound heard in the room but her thick coming sobs, and the slow tread of Austin, pacing up and down.

After a brief prayer and a world of kind expressions, the gentlemen left, and drove over to Dick Brown’s.

The door of Dick Brown’s house was swung wide open, and Dick sat dozing on the rough stone before it. He rose to make way for the gentlemen, who stopped to make some inquiries after his health, to which he replied :

"Oh, I'm so's to be hitchin' about, what's left on me ; but I tell the old woman I aint good for much."

"I am sorry to hear it,—sorry to hear it. Anything new?"

"No, I calc'late not: nothin' more'n's to be reckoned on't at my time of life. I've been a hard workin' man, Mr. Alden, and mebbby I aint lived quite as I might ; but step in, and see the old woman, she'll be glad to see you, and Mary too, poor child, for that matter. This 'ere business about poor Lyme has took hold on her pretty tough."

Dick showed his visitors into the house, and took care to keep out of sight. The house was comfortable and neat in its arrangements, and there was no want of company ; for Dick Brown belonged to a class, among whom ready and effective sympathy was never wanting. Kind and friendly in their social relations, of genial and improvident habits, spending freely what they had to-day, and trusting luck or the parish for to-morrow, they were always ready to extend a helping hand to each other, sure that one would never want while another had. Where sickness or affliction entered, the whole population of the little hamlet were sure to follow, to talk, and marvel, and help, and look on, and eat, as long as there was anything left, or till some fresher wonder, or some more astonishing case of being "dretful strangely handled," called them *en masse* to gape, and wonder, and eat somewhere else. Mary was weeping and striving all in her power to keep the house quiet, and to preserve some little regard to appearances. Judy was sitting in her chair, evidently dressed to see company, and grieving to the utmost of her besotted capacity. Poor Mary came forward with a timid blush to place chairs for the gentlemen. Shame and scorching mortification had dried up her tears.

"So the minister's come to see us, has he? Well, he'd orter. I am glad he has; he's jest come to raleize as poor folks has got feelins. I reckoned he niver knowed they had."

Judy maundered on till sleep overpowered her, when a rather energetic nod aroused her, and the pastor took advantage of the opportunity to speak:

"How do you find yourself to-day, Mrs. Brown?"

Judy looked up.

"Lawful, sur! It's Mr. Alden, aint it? Well, I was sorter dozing here, for I ain't had no sleep ter night. How does Mr. Alden get along?"

"Comfortable, Judy, comfortable."

"I'm dretful glad on't. How do` they stan' it over to Isaac's? Chuck full o' grace and comfort? Well, well, Isaac Austin's a good man if there is any good men in these days; but th'ain't no sich as tha' used to be. Ah, we can't have sich times now as we uster could in them old times. Well, we are all poor wicked sinners, we be; and poor Lyme, he's gone, poor boy!"

And poor Judy rocked and reeled her great body, and wept and wrung her hands, while Mary was heard sobbing in the kitchen. It was grief, genuine heart-sorrow. Poor Judy loved the orphan children of her son, and Lyme, the youngest, was very dear to her, when she was sober enough to have any feeling for anything.

"Poor dear child, I bought him a hankercher of a pedlar yesterday: it had a proper pretty picter on't, and readin'. Mary said as 'twas good readin', but I couldn't tell, for larnin' didn't come to poor folks when I's young, as it does now; but as I's sayin', Jim Austin, he read some on't to me, and I knew as 'twas sunthen about prayer.

Well, when they went off a flourishin' that hankercher, blessed leetle critters, leetle I thought as 'twas the last time I should ever a-set eyes on 'em, and that our poor Lyme was goin' to be drownded. Sudsy-me!—sudsy-me!”

And Judy wept again, and moaned, and wrung her hands as if her poor old heart would break.

“I hope, Mr. Alden, it won't go hard with my poor boy; he wan't a bad boy, Lyme wan't; but it goes to my heart, it does, to think how we brung him up. We sot him bad examples, we did, Mr. Alden. But we sot store by the poor boy, and we let him have his own way, as 'twere. If there was anything bad in Lyme, if the Lord would only please to lay it all on me. It wan't his fault if he was brung up bad. Oh, I'm dretful sorry! Sudsy-me—oh, sudsy-me!”

“Well, I hope, Judy, if you feel that you have done wrong, and have not lived as you should have done, you will repent now, and try to live a better life in future.”

“Ah! lawful sus! we all on us need to do better'n we do. I'm a poor sinful old critter, but I'm een'y most done. I shan't stay to sin but dretful leetle more. If I's only in a state; but I tell my ole man I ain't got no dyin' grace—the more's the pity. I do long to have.”

“You have nothing to do with dying grace, Judy—dying grace is for the dying hour, the living need the grace which will enable them to regulate their daily lives. You want the grace which will lead you to live a 'godly, righteous and sober life.' Have you got that?”

Judy had no perception of sober, but as the antithesis of drunk, and she answered as she understood:

“Who says I ain't sober? I don't know but Mr. Alden thinks I'm 'how-come-you-so' now?”

"I hope, Judy, you would not be found otherwise than sober at such a time as this?" replied the clergyman, adroitly evading the question.

"I must have a little gin, when I have my spells. Ther' don't nothin' else do me no sort o' good. I've tried all sorts o' yarb drink-tea, and took most no end o' docter stuff. La, 'twan't no use. When my spells come on, I can't get no comfort in nothin' else."

"Are these attacks of illness frequent, Judy?" asked Mr. Alden.

"It does as tho' they kinder growed on me, and it seems to take more'n more to break 'em, but I ain't cal'late to get overtook."

"Well, Judy, I hope you will think of what I tell you; and as you say you did not exactly do your duty by Lyman, try to make it up to Mary for his sake. She is a good affectionate child to you, and you must not give her too much trouble when you have those spells you speak of."

The clergyman turned to have some conversation with Mary, and Judy was soon nodding again in her chair, undisturbed by anything that was not particularly addressed to herself. Evelyn silently handed to Mary, in Ernest's name, a little sum for the supply of her own peculiar personal wants, and they took their leave.

"Ah," said Mr. Alden, as he put his horse a little upon his mettle, "it is a common saying, 'it takes all sorts of folks to make a world.' Clergymen and physicians can testify to the truth of it. Now I don't know whether to crowd on sail, or to take a reef or two, as we pass these straits," said Mr. Alden, good humoredly, as they neared a little settlement on their road home; "we shall be hailed from every door."

"You may as well reef," said Evelyn in reply, "for I think yonder craft intends to bring you to."

So the clergyman pulled in the reins, concluding to slacken his pace and run the gauntlet, through the shower of tonguey missiles; every door stood open, and messengers ready to beckon or bring to in some way, stood waiting his approach. At the first door, a long, slouchy looking man, with his knees bowing out considerably in advance of his long flat feet, clap-boarded with a triple layer of patches, crowding the tobacco into a short, stumpy pipe with his thumbs, and giving vent at the same time to a sort of muffled whistle, as though it was not "manners" before the minister to let out a right merry piping. Hitched to the fence by a rope, stood a down-headed beast, innocent of much currying, thonged to a crazy little wagon, very decrepit in tiring and spokes, in which sat a little sunburnt urchin, holding the antiquated reins. As the carriage drew near, the sleepy looking animal pricked up its ears, and turned its head in the direction of the sound, as far as the tethering would admit. "Oh, daddy, daddy, do come—the mare keeps a steppin'," cried the boy, in great alarm.

The man advanced slowly, cramming his pipe as he "sawneyed" along.

"'Spose they aint heerd nothin' o' Austin's boys, as Mr. Alden knows on?"

"Nothing, Ben, nothing."

"Comes hard on Austin; that are was a first-rate boat o' hisn."

"By darn, daddy, do come—I can't hold the mare," whined the boy.

"Don't be oneasy, Joe, I shall be along arter a while."

"Poor human nature! Thinking first of a thing it coveted," sighed the clergyman, as he moved along to answer a swing of the hand from the next door. The doorway was occupied by a big burly woman, with scant hair combed back and tied tightly behind, leaving her round, full, moon face entirely unshaded, but screening her eyes from the sun with her great round red arm, she waddled across the sandy path to shake hands with her minister, and ask her set of questions. Having done the complimentaries, she broached thus:

"I wonder if Mr. Alden knows who's sick long down the road?"

"I do not."

"I nuther; but I reckon I seen the Doctor's horse and shay a spell ago. I thought mebbly Mr. Alden knowed. Solemn times, Mr. Alden, down our way."

"Very true, Polly, very true—a distressing affair."

"I never! It does do desput," and with this lucid communication, Polly returned to stand in the doorway and see who had the honor of speaking to the minister next. But the attack seemed to be over for the present; doors and windows were stuck full of eyes; children peeped their white heads round the corners of the houses; men leaned against the door jambs, whistling, with their hats drawn down over their eyes, very busy, and pretending not to notice; and bare-headed boys lay on their stomachs, kicking up their heels on the little sheds and styres thatched with sea-weed, spelling "hard words" very loud, and hoping the minister heard. They had nearly gained the woods again, when a door banged open from the shut-up part of a house of mal-pretension, and a woman stepped carefully out, and waited for Mr. Alden to drive across the rough

highway, and inquire her pleasure. She was a "pretty-wayed, proper spoken person," and seemed of the consequential class who expect to be attended to, and are sure of their "position." She was a woman of "manners," and "hoped she knew what belonged to good behavior." So she had to keep the carriage waiting in the sun, till she had done up the "politeness" before she came to the point.

"I was wishing to get to town. Perhaps Mr. Alden would not mind taking a passenger?"

"It is not in my power, Mrs. Thorn; you see I have a friend with me."

"Of course, I see. I am not very heavy, though," persisted Mrs. Thorn.

"Very true; but the road is, and my carriage is not light."

"It has two seats," coolly remarked Mrs. Thorn.

"I know it," replied Mr. Alden, laughing; "but my horse is not very powerful."

"He looks in good flesh. Did not I see four in the carriage the other day?"

"Possibly; but they were children."

"Some children are as heavy as some grown folks."

"I am very happy, in the case of my own, to agree with you," said the clergyman, amused at the hint.

"Well, you can, at least, take my bundles, and I will try to get up myself some other way."

"Well, well, throw them in."

"But I have not them here; they're down to Belden's. But you need not mind driving back half a mile; there's time enough."

"Better the budgets than their owner," said Mr. Alden to his companion, preparing to wheel round; "things are seldom so bad but they might be worse."

"Hold up, Mr. Alden, I'll jump in and ride down with you. It's a long hot walk in the sand."

There was no help for it, and the lady climbed in.

After considerable delay, to which the calm pastor submitted with the acquiescing indifference of stoicism as to inevitable necessity, the bundles were brought out, of all shapes, sizes, and degrees of gravity—bags, budgets, and baskets, with a specific direction for every one—this little bag of dried blackberries to be left in this place; that big bundle of wool to be dropped at that place; such a great rustling bag of sweet fern at another; and that basket of "yellow-sweets" somewhere else. Once more on the way home, the good-natured clergyman indulged in a hearty laugh, in which his quiet companion was fain to join him.

"A pretty time I should have, meandering about the street distributing all this trash. I shall do no such thing. I shall just tumble it all out at the first place, which, as it happens, is close on our path."

Without further molestation, the travelers reached home, only halting once to eject Mrs. Thorn's trumpery. Ernest was anxiously awaiting his father's return, hoping more than he was aware of, till he felt how keen was his disappointment.

"How did dear, good Mr. Austin bear it, papa?" he asked.

"As a father *must*, Ernest, and as a Christian *should*. He asked affectionately after you, and hoped you would feel better. He set me an example I feel I should fall far short of, in his meek submission to his Maker's will."

CHAPTER XXI.

LYMAN BEECHER BROWN and Jim Austin, with little Steenie, bounding along in his new shoes, and trying to step as wide and as fast as Jim, went laughing and singing on their way towards Dick's, to get Lyme's basket before they went to the field. They found Mary setting the house in order, and singing cheerfully about her work, practising the last new tune, preparatory to the singing meeting in the evening—a little festival in the quiet and laborious life of the artless girl. Judy was sitting on the door-sill, enjoying the shade and the scented air from the clover fields near, with her everlasting knitting-work on her lap, admiring a new snuff-box which she had just purchased, because it had such a "pretty face on the lid." Lyme hunted up his basket, and, after having made a marauding descent upon the pantry, filling his pockets with Mary's fresh "tea-cakes," prepared to march off, when Judy called him to come and see what she had bought for him of a trunk pedlar.

"I want you should read the verses for your granny, Lyme, and then you may have it," said Judy, displaying, with infinite satisfaction, a great red and black cotton handkerchief, bearing a representation of the "Cotter's family," with elucidating stanzas from the "Saturday Night."

"Oh, blame the thing! I can't, granny. I'm in a hurry."

"Yes, you kin; I say you shill. Come, now, Lyme, just read a little out for granny—now do," coaxed Judy.

"I'll read it for you, Judy," said Jim, spreading out the great glaring sheet, and beginning to read and point out the personages. But Lyme caught the handkerchief in a rough, boyish manner, and ran shouting away with it; and Jim and Steenie followed, leaving Judy exclaiming, "our Lyme's a sassy varmint. Well, boys is boys, I consate, now-a-days, with all their districk and sabby-day-schools, jist as much as they useter was. They don't larn no manners to boast on, 's I see."

"I say, Jim, we'd better go to the boat first, and get that blanket, and carry it up with us to the lot, before we begin at the blackberries."

Jim agreed, and they turned their faces to the shore. The boat was afloat, fastened to a stake on the beach, and Lyme volunteered to wade out and get the article of which they were in pursuit. He found the refreshing coolness of the water rather pleasant after his long run in the sun and sand, so he called Jim to join him. But Jim objected that the water was deep for Steenie to venture into. Lyme obviated that difficulty at once, by coming back and taking Steenie on his shoulders to the boat. There was no difficulty or apparent danger in what they had done. They sat down to rest and partake of Lyme's cakes; then came out the great red and black handkerchief, and, with their heads over it, reading, and expatiating, and explaining to Steenie, time passed unheeded, and in their engrossing interest, they forgot everything besides.

Suddenly, Lyme looked up, and turned his glance

landward; the shore was an unfordable distance behind them.

"By thunder! Jim, we're adrift!" exclaimed he, with eyes dilating with terror, and arms stretched out hopelessly towards the shore.

"What shall we do, Lyme?" asked Jim. "How fast we are getting off shore! What shall we do?"

"Do, indeed! nothing, but go down the bay, and no help for it. Oh, if I only had an oar or a pole! anything that was a stick!" and Lyme looked despairingly over the boat; there was nothing he could make available, and he set his teeth, breathing thick and short, as the utter helplessness of their position became a settled certainty to his perceptions. He looked at Jim, with a look which said, as plainly as look could, "we are gone, Jim, for all we can do ourselves." And Jim looked at Steenie with a sad and troubled expression, and Steenie saw that something was wrong, and was beginning to look bewildered and terrified.

"Keep it out of his thoughts, if you can, Jim: make as if 'twas all play. If he begins to cry, I'll shall give up."

"I shan't deceive poor dear little Steenie; he'll bear it like a man, if I tell him just the whole truth," said Jim, resolutely. "I can't tell nor act a lie, with death so near, Lyman. Oh, if I could only save him!"

"What have you come way off here for, Jim? won't father be angry with you?"

"We could not help it, Steenie; the stake drew out, and we've drifted off; and what's worse, Steenie, we can't get back."

Jim's courage failed him when he looked back, and saw how fast the distance was widening, widening, widening, and still widening, between them and the shore. "How strong the tide sets, Lyme! is it always so?"

"I've heard old folks say there was a wonderful strong current through here. Don't you remember, not long ago, how Indian Talkhouse drifted clean to Block Island? I tell you what, Jim, we're in a fix, no mistake."

Jim turned, and looked toward the other shore.

"It's no use, Jim, looking that way, the tide will set us wide enough o' Garner's Island."

"When will they miss us from home, do you think, Lyme?" asked Jim, considering the chances of being pursued.

"What time will your father get home? He'll come down to the shore to haul up the boat, and then—"

And then! The thought was too mighty for Jim, and he broke into passionate weeping.

"And then," continued Lyme, "he'll know in a minute what's happened, and somebody'll be after us."

"But it will be dark night before he gets home; it was late when he went. We shall be far enough out of reach or sight before that time;" and Jim's heart failed him again, as he looked back, in thought, upon his pleasant home. He thought of his mother sitting so unconsciously in her accustomed place; he could see her sad, pale face, as she sat alone over her sewing, and his thoughts ran on to the time when they should be missed. He saw the first alarm, the increasing dismay, the search, the anguish, the despair! Oh, how it all came up to his mind's eye!—how vividly, how distinctly,—home, and its busy sunset hour!

He remembered that he was depended upon to bring home the cows; the hope struck him,—they would miss him then! there was one little chance more. He looked back the way they had come, but as far as eye could reach, there was nothing afloat on the bay. He saw that they

were leaving Gardiner's Island behind them, on the left, and he knew, oh! how well, that day was declining.

"How near shall we come to Montauk, Lyman?" he tremblingly inquired.

"Not so near as we should like to, I'm afraid, Jim, for that's our last chance. If we don't fetch Montauk, it's all over with us; we shall go to sea, if we don't swamp in the breakers when we meet the ocean."

Steenie sat motionless and silent, looking at the seemingly flitting trees and fences on the shore as they drifted seaward, very pale and certainly alarmed, but courageous and calm. Now he spoke, nestling close to Jim, in a soft, tremulous voice:

"There's nobody to pick up the chips for mother, and get in the kindlings to-night, Jim! What will she do without us, Jim, when night comes?"

Jim drew Steenie close to him, and clasping his arms around him, mourned and wept over him; but Steenie was calm, and he tried to comfort Jim with words of hope.

"Oh, don't cry, Jim! we shall be finded. The Great God will take care of us; and he will send somebody in a nice boat to carry us home. Don't cry, Jim, don't."

"Oh, dear, darling little Steenie, if you was only safe at home with father and mother, I could bear it myself. But what will you do, with nothing to keep you comfortable, and drifting away off in the dark night, into the wild, wide sea? Oh, Steenie, dear, blessed little Steenie, if you were only at home to comfort poor mother and father! How lonesome he will be! Oh! what will they do without us? What will they have to comfort them for this?"

Jim's tears flowed afresh at these rushing thoughts, and Steenie said :

"Don't cry, brother Jim, don't cry," with the tears rolling silently in big drops over his own cheeks.

Lyme said but little : thought was busy within him, and hope was ebbing fast ; but he was more mature in the rough ways of life ; more steady, where he could see any chance to battle with obstacles, and older by several years than his companions ; he felt in some measure that he was responsible, so he tried to behave, and by a show of courage to cheer them all he could, and he spoke as firmly as his beating heart would let him :

"We must be easy and still in the bottom of the boat, and keep her on an even keel. 'Taint so dreadful, after all ! She'd float always in such still weather as this. If the wind should blow up, though, Jim !"

Jim knew very well, that if the wind should blow up, it would be the worse for them ; but he was getting a little familiarized to their situation. The first appalling shock of feeling that they were in danger, had passed, and his spirit began to rise from its paralyzing effects. Hours and hours sped away, still they were drifted on, helpless, hopeless, on—on—on, toward the roaring sea. Daylight had faded away over the bay, and the last faint glow went out over the land where lay their far off home. The blanket, now, was a very important consideration ; they carefully wrapped Steenie in it, and drew closer together, for the air blew cold over that dismal, dark waste of waters. One by one the bright stars came forth, in the clear, blue sky, glancing and dancing in the rippling waters as the little boat glided through them. Soon the whole heaven was studded, and the wide waters sprinkled with sparkling

lights, still they floated on, away, away, farther and farther from home and hope, from cherishing hearts, helping hands, and shielding, sheltering love. Colder and colder came the evening ocean damps, closer and closer to each other crept those helpless boys; rougher and rougher came the long, heaving swell; heavier and heavier fell those sinking hearts; faster and faster, and farther, kept their little bark floating on. Steenie strained his arms, with a little shudder, in a tighter clasp round Jim, and lifted his tearful blue eyes to his:

"Sing, Jim, that we need not hear the roaring waters. Sing a pretty hymn; it will do us good?"

"Can you sing, Lyme? I'm afraid I can't; but I'll try, because Steenie likes it, if you will help me."

"What shall we sing?" asked Lyme. "I don't know words as well as tunes."

Lyme cleared his voice, and began to hum snatches of tunes, the thought of Mary choking all the music out of his throat; but he persevered for Steenie's sake, and his notes rose loud over the dark waters, the sounds inspiring courage as he went on.

"Come, Steenie, what shall we sing?"

"Sing 'Darkness,' brother Jim, will you?" said Steenie.

"I will try, darling, good little Steenie: wait a minute."

"I don't know the words," said Lyme, "but I'll just keep along with the tune."

There was less of tenderness, and more of terror, in Lyme's emotions than in Jim's, and his voice rising strong and clear, served to cover the tremulous, broken sinkings of Jim's, as they struggled through Steenie's chosen hymn.

Darkness o'er the deep is stealing,
Home's afar, and hope grows dim ;
But with God is help and healing ;
Let us lift our hearts to him !

There's a sleepless eye that sees us,
There's a friend forever nigh ;
In thy name, oh, blessed Jesus !
To that Friend we lift our cry.

For no earthly aid is near us,
In this dark, dread hour of need ;
God above, oh ! help us, hear us !
Or we perish as we plead.

Oh ! if death's cold clasp enchain us
'Neath these waters, lost, and lone,
For the crimson sins that stain us,
Saviour, let thy blood atone.

Night is closing fast before us,
Tossing on this surging sea :
If the whelming waves come o'er us,
Father ! take us home to Thee.

The voices of the singers ceased, and the sounds died away ; but the effort had been salutary, it had composed and cheered them. Lyme drew out his new handkerchief to wrap about Steenie, and with it came a crowd of swarming memories of home, and Mary, of his grandparents, misguided perchance and vicious, but full of indulgent affection for him, of all whose kindness had made his poor home happy. His heart swelled with sorrow, as he thought with bitter contrition of all his shortcomings, and failings in duty, and words of disrespect and unkindness, and little thoughtless freaks of mischief and

disobedience. He would have given worlds to recall them, or to seek forgiveness of those against whom they were committed. It was too late now, too late!

"Lyme, I little thought when Miss Caroline taught me to sing that hymn, that I should ever sing it in such a time as this—alone with you and Steenie on the wide, dreary sea. Oh, we never know what's before us!"

"How come she to learn it to you, Jim? It does as if she knew beforehand. Did she make it o' purpose for you, Jim?"

"Oh no! she wrote it for her brother, Hull, when he was going to sea once, long, long ago; before I was born."

"Oh, Jim, how I wish I had read the verses to poor granny. I am sorry now, Jim. Poor granny! She was always kind to me. She'd do without anything, to let me have what I wanted. Granny was good, Jim, when she *was* granny, you know; and grandfer, he was always clever, and good-natured to me and Mary. He never struck me a blow in his life, or hardly gave me a short word. Poor dear grandfer! Who'll help him out and in the wagon now?"

Lyme bowed his head upon Jim's shoulder, and wept aloud, as the thought of his distant home, and its decrepit and desolate inmates, came over him.

"Oh, Jim, Jim, what a time they're having there now; and Mary! What will she do? What will she do?"

And again the boy wept in uncontrollable grief.

"It's dreadful to think of what they are feeling at home now, Lyme. That's the worst part of it to me. It seems to me if Steenie was only safe at home, that it would not be much for me; but it would be hard to go down under the dark waters any way. We can't change things now, Lyme?"

"Oh, I only wish I'd done what granny asked me to ; but I didn't mean to be wicked to her, Jim, only I did hate you should see her just as she was then ! Do you think that was breaking the Commandment about honoring our father and mother ? Can you say it, Jim ?"

Jim repeated the fifth Commandment.

"There 'tis, Jim. Is that the reason my days are to be cut short ? That can't be it, for here's you and Steenie ; you haint broke that Commandment."

"You don't know that, Lyme. I knew, just as well as if they had told me, that they would not let us wade off to the boat with Steenie ; but I did it. Was that honoring my father and mother ? No, no, Lyme, I knew I was doing wrong. And here we are to pay for it. Oh, if it was not that Steenie's here !"

"Jim, do you know all the Commandments ?"

"Yes, I believe I do, Lyme ; it's one thing to know 'em, and another to keep 'em. Aint it worse to do wrong when we know what right is all the time ?"

"Say them all, Jim, if you know 'em."

Jim said all the Commandments, Steenie going along with him when he could.

"Now, say the Lord's Prayer, Jim."

Jim and Steenie said that too, the tears flowing, as Jim remembered how often in the still twilight he had knelt by his bedside, and repeated it after his mother's prompting.

"Oh, I wish I knew as many good things as you do ; but it's my own fault that I don't. Many and many's the time that Mary has tried to get me to learn my catechise ; but I wouldn't. I don't know as much as little, good Steenie here. Poor little fellow !"

"I can say, 'Now I lay me,' Lyme, if you want me to; but I can't kneel here, as I do with mother, because it will make the boat rock."

Steenie folded his hands, and looking devoutly up to the clear, starry heavens, repeated his simple prayer.

"You won't be afraid to go to sleep now, Steenie, and Lyme and I will take care of you."

"God will take care of me, Jim. Mother said so. You needn't keep awake. God's always awake."

"That's true, Steenie. Snuggle down close to us and keep warm, darling, little, good brother; now go to sleep. Lyme and I ain't sleepy yet."

Steenie closed his eyes, in the perfect trust that God would take care of him; and Jim felt that there was protection in his innocent presence. Slumber stole over the helpless child as he lay closely encircled in Jim's yearning embrace, the tears flowed over him like rain, and the protecting arms were tightened with a shudder, as the brave boy thought what, and how soon, might be his next fearful awakening. The moon had arisen, and the scene was bright, and calm, and beautiful, as they looked out upon it. But the last ray of hope faded from Jim's heart as he lifted his head, and through the blinding tears, saw Montauk light shining far behind him.

"I saw it some time ago," said Lyme, in reply to Jim's exclamation, "but I didn't like to tell you. We've no more to do, but keep as still as we can, and say our prayers. Oh, if I only knew how to pray! Jim, can't you pray? It's a dreadful thing, Jim, to live so long in the world as I have, and not to know how to pray when I'm going out of it. Oh, Lord have mercy upon us!"

"That's a prayer, Lyme. Don't you remember what

was in our Testament reading lesson this morning? How the Publican stood afar off and cried, 'Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner?'"

"Aint we 'afar off,' Jim? 'Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner.'"

Steenie slept peacefully in Jim's embrace, and Jim bent over him in tearful, speechless tenderness, and still as they drifted on and on, Lyme's cry went up in terror and despair:

"Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner."

CHAPTER XXII.

THE long miserable hours of that first dreadful day crept on, but no comforting gleam broke through the gloom that shrouded the home of Isaac Austin. The first rush of sympathizing, inquiring, and curious neighbors was over; enduring kindness, sitting silently by, saying nothing of the "duty of being resigned," or "the onreasonable sin of taking on," was with them still. Those who came to "drop in a spell and keep them company," just at the hour of meals, while aching hearts and trembling hands waited upon them, had "eat supper," and gone to tell a long gossiping story of how "Ailsie did but do," or how "Mr. Isaac was the supportedest man; he was a patent of a man."

Austin had been to the shore to examine such evidence as could be gathered from circumstances, and he came home with his mind relieved on one point, saying to his wife:

"I am satisfied, Ailsie, that it wasn't done in mischief; the poor children went by our orders—they didn't untie the boat. I thought it was strange they should dare do that. The water was deep where she would naturally drift to at that time of the tide; they'd be obliged to wade out to get the blanket; the strain on her, after they got in,

drawed out the stake ; it wasn't drove very firm, just to hold her when she was light. I see how it was all done, just as well as if I had been there. Lyme must have backed Steenie ; she drifted aways before they observed it, and in their fright and trying to get back, she dipped and filled. They'd a shouted and swung. Somebody must have seen and heard them at that time of day—if it had not all been over very quick. Their precious little bodies aint far off shore."

Austin paused : the thought was too appalling for the father, self-controlling though he was ;—there was deep, strong feeling beneath that calm seeming.

"It's better, mother, than if they had run away, and met their death in an act of disobedience. Let us be thankful for that comfort : to me it's a great-comfort."

"Oh, my poor boys!" groaned the mother. "I sent them—I sent them away from me forever."

"Not forever, Ailsie—not forever ; does not our Bible teach us a happier trust than that?"

"Oh, that dreadful word 'never!' what a new meaning it has to my heart now! Never to see Jim's bright eyes lifted to mine again ; never to hear his sweet voice reading his lessons, or singing at his play ; never to hear Steenie's little pattering steps, or to see his dear curly head, with its silky brown locks and soft blue eyes. Never more! Always alone, to stretch out my longing arms to clasp them, and bring them home empty, to crush my own heart."

"We must not listen to such thoughts, Ailsie. I know it is hard to put them away. I know how naturally they come ; I know they will come ; but we must not cherish them ; it is unprofitable—it unfits us for our duties. The Lord has work, Ailsie, for all the living to do, and he re-

quires them to do it diligently. We must look to Him, in this our hour of trial, for strength and patience to do what he sees fit to put into our hands, and to bear what, in his wisdom, he lays upon our hearts. Mourn we must; it is right that we should, this unlooked for separation from our children; but, while we mourn, we can look forward in confidence to meeting our lambs, 'gone, not lost,' where tears and partings shall come to us never more."

"But it is so long to wait: so long. When I think, Isaac, how ages on ages the faithful have slept in the dust, waiting—waiting—waiting, and how many long, long ages yet to come we may have to wait—oh, it seems so dreary and discouraging. Must I, too, wait and weary, and wait still, ages on ages, before I see those forms and features again? How can I—how can I?"

"Let her alone, Uncle Austin, there's no reasoning away grief like hers—let it relieve itself in words," said Anna, gently, as her Aunt walked hurriedly about, in a burst of more than ordinary excitement.

Austin sought not to restrain, but he would fain have suggested quieting and comforting considerations to his suffering wife. He shared too deeply in her sorrow to reprove it, but it had been one of his duties to visit and pray with the sick, the afflicted, and the dying. He used almost mechanically the language of common-place condolence, feeling in his own conscious heart, that no words of comfort, that no arguments—(however Scriptural or orthodox, so far as doctrinal belief went)—that nothing that man could offer, could reach, with balm and healing, that fresh, quivering wound.

He felt how powerless, when turned upon his own heart, were all the weapons with which he had been accustomed

to combat and preach down the sorrows of others ; he acknowledged how much more easily he could find solace for them than for himself.

There was so much to agonize—so full of melting associations was the house ; every shelf, and drawer, and closet, every spot in and around the house, was teeming with objects, starting up at every turn.

Here was the package, never opened, containing the cloth for their jackets, the black ribbon for their hats, the hats themselves, brought out to be banded, the books for Jim, the coveted knife for Steenie. There, as everywhere, the world was darkened to the grieving heart : the sunshine and all the glad creatures that basked in it, the joy and the gladness of the whole earth, were a dull mockery, from which the spirit turned, sickening, away. How, as the day waned, had every hour been noted with the aggravating comparison, “yesterday, at this time,” “last week, at this time.” Ah ! everybody knows, few need to read or be told, the diary of a bereaved household.

The soft, balmy evening had come again in its stillness, breathless, without a cloud, with its cool, refreshing dews reviving every languid thing but the restless, aching hearts that looked out upon the scene. The business of the day was over, and the inmates of Isaac Austin’s house were gathered to its shelter. Ailsie stood at the open door and looked out upon the night : there was no sound, save the shrill notes of the locusts chirping on the trees, and far off toward the bay, a lone whip-poorwill complainingly telling his tale to the stars. Ailsie heard nothing but the mournful murmuring of the bay, as its little wavelets came rippling in, and broke with a sighing plash upon the beach. Oh, how that whispering

voice from the waters came on her ears with a language unheard till now !

She closed the door and turned away. But a strange, indefinable feeling like self-reproach came over her heart. She had cruelly shut the door against the shelterless heads of her boys ! With a pang she could not speak, she set open the door, and turned to her seat by the window. There, gleaming in the light of the new risen moon, stood Steenie's corn, its long, pendant leaves wet with the dew, and the welcomed spindle of yesterday, hanging its beaded tassels heavy with its tears. Carlo was still keeping his watch by Steenie's cap, coming, when he was called, to his food ; listening sometimes for a moment, with an impatient whine, at the bed-room door, and then lying down to his voluntary watch over the treasured relic of his loving little companion and friend.

Night was deepening ; the diminished circle drew closer together around the family altar ; the customary devotional exercises were gone through with, composedly ; the tearful good-night was spoken, and the household was still. The clock in the corner, standing in its dark mahogany case, as it had stood ticking away the minutes and hours of departed generations, still kept ticking on the same unvarying tale, " gone—gone—gone—gone."

But weeping, and watching, and weariness, must rest at last ; heavy sleep settled on the languid eyes ; aching hearts forgot awhile their dreariness, to awake ere long, and ask of themselves, in the bewildered wretchedness of returning consciousness—" Can this be even so, or was it perchance a dream ?"

CHAPTER XXIII.

"IF I could get this pain away from my heart ; if I could think of things not so sad ; if I could only go to sleep, and not dream of those poor boys, I should be so glad," said Ernest, mournfully, after having tried in vain to take some interest in his books, or find some occupation that would amuse him. His strength was waning fast, under the oppression of his grief and self-reproach for the loss of his little friends. Evelyn took him out daily to ride, seeking every change, and studying constantly to cheer and amuse him. Every effort was thankfully and smilingly met, but it was useless—he could not forget. Ada seemed to have forgotten her own troubles in her anxiety for her child. She rode with him, whenever he went out, venturing boldly wherever he inclined to go. Gentle, assiduous, affectionate, her whole deportment seemed changed, and the shadow which had lowered between her and her husband was banished and forgotten. Was her heart occupied, or had she learned caution ? It was sufficient ; she was the sweet, loving Ada of old.

"Papa," said Ernest, "I thought Clarence was coming to see us : I wish he would come. The sight of his dear, kind face, would be worth all the medicines in the world."

"It is time to hear from him again ; then, if he does not say anything about coming soon, I will write and bring him, if you wish."

"If he don't come pretty soon, papa,"—Ernest did not finish the sentence, but the trembling heart of his father felt its meaning. The next day the expected letter from De Koven came, full of kind expressions of sympathy in Evelyn's sorrow, with an inclosure of light-hearted rattling nonsense for Ernest's amusement. Evelyn sat down by Ernest's bed-side, and carefully avoiding all painful allusions to himself, read such passages from his letters as he thought would interest him.

"I am wandering about the country," wrote De Koven, "I scarcely know why, for I take little interest in the follies and frivolities of the moving, fashionable world. I cannot enjoy their heartless conventionalities. I seek in vain for cordial companionship, in the cold, hollow formalities of their social intercourse. I turn with a true sailor's contempt from such fellowship, from their lewd acquaintanceship, and white kid finger-tipping friendships. There is so much display, so much puppet parade and drilled manœuvring, so much too perceptible machinery in everything—so much fuss-and-flag and banner-blazonry—so much tawdry tinsel finery in all the doings of the times, that I have no relish for any participation. I would give more for one hour's lounge in the sand, among the frank-hearted seamen-farmers of Sea-spray, than for the whole of it.

"I stood in Broadway, the other day, and watched the interminable Clay procession, moving on in all the imposing solemnity of shrouded ensigns, and all sorts of black-crape sorrow, and for my life I could not help asking a gentleman who stood near me, 'Where were the banners and

emblems of the sin-eaters? and at what position in the array we were to look for the 'soul-cakes?'

"The poor fellow stared at me, and moved cautiously away, as though he was not quite certain that I was not a dangerous neighbour. In this instance, I admit there was perfect propriety in paying honor to a great man passing to his rest. I was really and sincerely falling in with his funeral train, and following his remains a little way on their grave-ward journey. Still, I could not help thinking, 'there is no genuine heart warmth in all this. It will all have to be paid for with somebody's money. Every inch of grief that streams along the streets, or twines round flagstaff or pike, in the form of black muslin, has its price.' I have seen so many of these sham funerals, and honors paid to horses in black housings, that the effect, when the occasion calls for and justifies it, is entirely destroyed—to me, it is all farce.

"We Yankees, Evelyn, are ridiculously given to deifying all our great men, without making much distinction in our degrees of deification, or grading our honors with any reference to claims or calibre. We shall have a fearful calendar after awhile, if we continue to pay divine honors to all partizan politicians, since every section of country, and every shade and subdivision of party, has its candidate. If we deify every successful, and canonize as a martyr every unsuccessful leader of party, their temples and shrines will soon o'ershadow the land."

"Papa," asked Ernest, who had been listening with great interest, "what does Clarence mean by 'sin-eaters' and 'soul-cakes?'"

"I thought you would ask, my son," replied Evelyn. "It refers to some nursery story of his childhood, belong-

ing to the chapter of 'Once there was.' He alludes to a system said to have existed in that part of England from which his ancestors and their servants came, of hiring poor people to attend the funerals of the richer class, to take upon themselves the sins of the person deceased, when 'soul-cakes' were passed around, and placed in accessible situations for all to eat who chose, whether hired or not. The number of 'sin-eaters' and of cakes eaten depended, I presume, more upon the ability or willingness to pay, than upon the number or nature of the sins to be assumed. In these days people have sins enough of their own to answer for, without taking their neighbors. But it was not strange the old nursery tale occurred to Clarence."

"That's a queer notion, though. Mother, don't you wish you could bake up all your sins in a cake, and hire somebody to eat them?"

"How absurdly you talk, Ernest," said Ada, tartly; then adding, quickly, "it would not take Dury long to make a cake big enough for your sins, Ernest; it would be a trifle to eat it. I would do it myself, without being hired."

"Thank you, mother," said Ernest, smiling. "There's been a blessed price paid for all our sins." Then, turning to his father, he opened another subject:

"Papa, there is one thing you can do. It is not much, I know; but I should like if you would do it."

"What is it you wish? I will do anything I can do."

"I wish you would go to Gosport, and get a new boat for Mr. Austin. It won't be much for him; but it will be some comfort to me. And sometimes when he rows out on the bay with it, he will remember there were three little boys with him once, in pleasant old times."

Evelyn did not reply immediately. When he could speak, he said:

"You shall have the boat, Ernest. I will go to Gosport to-morrow, and see what I can do. I dare say I can find a nice one."

"And, papa, sometimes you will take Allen, and go down and get Mr. Austin to take you off in it, for the sake of old times. I like to think you will."

Evelyn buried his face in Ernest's pillow, and made no reply, but his frame shook with emotion as his thoughts went forward to the time which Ernest's words foreshadowed. He saw himself, as the boy suggested, with Allen and Austin floating over the glassy waters of the bay, and thinking of those no more by their side: of the two sleeping beneath the calm waters, and the one far away on the hill-side. He closed his eyes, but he could not shut the vision from his heart; he groaned in spite of himself, and clasped involuntarily the little form still throbbing with life beside him. Ernest passed his fingers caressingly through the dark locks which fell over the pale brow, and lifted them away; then turned to pleasanter themes, and soon beguiled his father into conversation on subjects apart from personal or painful interests.

A succession of rainy days prevented Evelyn from carrying out his purpose of going to Gosport, keeping everybody indoors who were not called out by indispensable business. Sea-spray meantime had been going on in its own fashion—stages trundled back and forth—travelers and trunks came and went—gay groups promenaded the streets—idle and unoccupied housewives and young girls, confined with domestic duties, looked out at them as they passed, and wondered if they were happy. They were, to outward seeming. If, beneath those gay garments they carried hearts laden with sorrow, or stained with sin,

they brought them with them, and Sea-spray was not accountable, nor sea-water an antidote.

Hay harvest and wheat harvest were over, and barn-doors stood open, that the air might circulate and benefit the fresh garnered crops, and the atmosphere was perfumed with the sweet scent of the new mown hay, mowed in the barns, or stacked in the pightels, while the clatter of threshing machines, or the thump, thump of flails, resounded in all directions, and the old windmill groaned and labored, and whirled its long arms, as the bags of new wheat came in, spreading all its canvas, and counting every breath of wind that stole up from the sea, in that season of famine-breeding calms.

The harvest hurry being over, busy preparations began for the fun and frolic of fishing; boats were carefully looked to, and seines were put in requisition. If Satan had any especial mischief on hand, there were no idle hands in Sea-spray, into which he could put it; for everybody was hard at work, dashing and splashing and tugging in the sea, robbing the water to enrich the land, and the beach was now the promenade and point of attraction for loungers and lookers-on.

A clear, pleasant day came at last, and Evelyn and Allen went to Gosport to see about the boat, which Ernest had requested his father to purchase for his friend Austin. They had been to the boat-builder's and selected a boat, which was to be sent round by trusty oarsmen to the boat-house on the beach, and were standing on the dock, Evelyn in conversation with the builder, and Allen watching the progress of a sloop, which he had seen for sometime beating her way in. She had gained well on her last tack, and was working her way up to the dock, when he was hailed by a voice which sounded strangely familiar, and turning

towards the quarter whence it proceeded, he almost sprang off his feet for surprise and joy ; for, standing on the deck of the sloop, he beheld Jim Austin holding Steenie by the hand, and Lyme Brown by his side. Breathless with his tidings, he turned to speak to Evelyn. He had walked back a distance to meet Captain Melton, who, with his neighbor, Captain Hull, had come down on the dock to give him the benefit of their opinions upon the purchase he had made. Allen laid his hand upon his arm, and pointing to the sloop, now laying off on a short tack, he told his tale, panting with earnestness and excitement. Boats, and builders, and prices, were all forgotten in the pleasure of Allen's communication, and he turned to follow the fleet steps of his overjoyed companion. The sloop was hauling slowly in ; and in nervous impatience they watched her nearing the position she was aiming to gain.

She gained it at last ; and, with a vigorous spring, Evelyn planted himself by the side of the little group on her deck, in whose story of strange voyaging he felt so deeply and peculiarly interested. Great, indeed, was the joy of the returned wanderers, to meet the familiar faces of Evelyn and Allen, and to hear tidings of home and friends ; and the tears rolled down Steenie's cheeks, and Jim's lip quivered, as Evelyn described the visit he had made at their homes, and the sorrow he witnessed, and Lyme's voice was husky as he said earnestly to Evelyn :

"It has been a good lesson to me. I hope I shall be the better for it to the longest day I live : that I do."

Their story was soon told. After that long night of suffering, palsied with terror, benumbed with cold, fainting from weariness, want of food, and exhaustion, they were picked up by the crew of a vessel bound to Boston, and kindly cared for, and helped on their homeward way.

They had come now from New-London, tired, home-sick, and somewhat travel-soiled and dirty. It was enough for Evelyn to know they were here, and apparently none the worse for their forced voyage. He secured a passage for them, as far as the village, with Captain Melton, telling him to deliver them to his keeping, and he would himself take them home to their friends.

"Now, Allen, we will make a quick trip of it to Sea-spray, to carry the good news to Ernest. I shall depend upon you to look up our conveyance, the first thing, for me to take the boys home, at once."

So saying, Evelyn sprang into the little wagon, with Allen by his side, and the old horse trotted rapidly homeward, as if conscious that he carried joy on his clattering hoofs.

Ernest was watching at the window, and Allen could not help giving his hat a swing over his head, and with it a loud hurrah, as they reined up in front of the house. Pony was turned out to cool himself in the grass, and the travelers, swelling with their secret, went in at the back door, and through to the room where the little household were sitting: Ada reading aloud for Ernest's entertainment. The book was laid aside, while they waited to hear what the new comers had to communicate.

"Come, tell us papa, did you find a boat?"

"Yes, I went to the man who built the other. He says this is precisely like it."

"Oh, I am so glad! You are so good to me, papa! when will he get it?"

"He will find it at the old place to-morrow morning, if the builder, in whose care I left it, can get a trusty crew to take it round."

"Oh, that will be just the thing ; but it will make the poor man feel so bad after all. I don't know, papa, but it was a mistake getting it just now," said Ernest, a sad, sorrowful expression chasing the brightness from his pale, innocent brow, which the transient joy had lighted as it passed.

"But that is not all. Allen found something he thought you would like, and I engaged Captain Melton to bring it up. 'Twas a queer kind of present for a small boy, but I think you will enjoy it very much."

"I am much obliged to Allen," replied Ernest, without manifesting much interest, "though I don't feel much like playing with anything, even if I had strength. But what is it?"

"Allen found it on board a vessel just coming in from New-London ; he saw it before she had reached the dock. I think, Ernest, it will be the pleasantest sight to you that the world affords. Just the right thing to go with the boat."

Ernest caught the idea, and his face was radiant with joy. He looked from his father to Allen, and he knew his guess was right :

"Is it them? All papa? All come again?"

"All three, Ernest, looking well and happy."

"Then they did drift out, as the old man said ; and where did they go? Who found them? Where have they been all this time?"

"I did not ask many questions. I was satisfied with what I saw. I left particulars for a future time."

Allen could answer in part such questions as interested Ernest, having had more talk with the boys. They were drifting away in the dim light of early day, and Lyme was

sending up his cry for mercy, hoarse and trembling, when a loud, cheering voice almost directly over them sung out :

“Steamer ahoy ! What poor soul is that lifting the lid of old Davy’s locker, to send up such a frightful yell ?”

Lyme looked up, and there, towering above them, with every thread of sail spread to coax a breeze, was a large vessel, almost motionless on the sea. The kind sailor who had hailed them, threw Lyme a rope to steady himself a little, and they were soon safe on board. The vessel was bound to Boston, but was long in getting there in consequence the of calm. The boys were kindly attended to, and but for sea-sickness, and troubled thoughts of home, would have been comfortable enough.

“How far to sea had they drifted ?” asked Ada.

“I don’t know how far. They were taken up between Montauk Point and Block Island ; but I don’t know where.”

“What became of the boat ? Did they lose that ?”

“They had to sell that in Boston. They could not do anything else with it, and the captain of the vessel sold it for them, and gave Jim the money to pay their expenses homeward.”

“That’s good,” said Ernest. “Now Mr. Austin will be glad of the new one. I guess he will drive his stake down strong next time.”

“I guess the boys will keep out of it, if he does,” said Allen, as he ran out to find Mr. Osgood, and see if he would take Evelyn and the boys over to Bayside, anxious that no time should be lost in getting them home ; while Dury hurried up her tea in anticipation, rejoicing in her honest simplicity, more for the good effect their return would have upon Ernest, than for the relief it would bring to sor-

row, not having witnessed, she had not taken much thought for. The boys kept an impatient watch for the farm wagon, in which the wearied and home-sick wanderers were to come from Gosport. At length the horses heads appeared, and wheeling round the corner behind them came the long body of the wagon, with the heads of the watched and waited for peering up from the straw.

Great was the congratulation and joy on their arrival, and pleasant the running of neighbors and children from all quarters to shake hands, and ask questions, and be glad. Deep, earnest, unselfish was the feeling which gladdened the gentle heart of the pale, pining boy, who extended his little slender hand to welcome them ; pure the joy which spoke in the tears, which fell among the silken curls of Steenie, and dimpled in the smile with which he greeted the older companions of his perils; and genuine and fervent the gush of earnest, if wordless, thanksgiving, which his heart sent up for this so great deliverance.

Tea was over ; Dury's preparations having been duly honored by the hearty attentions paid to them by the hungry participants. But Mr. Osgood was at the door with his carriage, and Evelyn hurried them off.

"Oh, Steenie, Steenie !" said Ernest, calling after him, "can you tell me who was the baddest man yet ? Well, then, who'll be the gladdest man to night ?"

"Isaac Austin, now we'm finded," answered Steenie, prompted in part by Jim ; and the carriage rolled away, Ernest clasping his hands, as he listened to the fainting sound of its wheels, with a deep, relieving—

"Thank God ! Thank God !"

CHAPTER XXIV.

CALMNESS and composure had succeeded the first wild outbreak of sorrow, and Ailsie Austin returned to the discharge of her ordinary domestic duties, wretched and almost broken-hearted, but still unmurmuring, and, as far as might be, submissive. With a sorrow subdued and solemn, she went about her house, seeking in every way to cheer and comfort all around her—studying her husband's tastes and wishes with unobtrusive solicitude—preparing all her meals with careful reference to his preferences, and regulating all her movements with anxious care to meet his feelings and promote his peace—keeping out of sight of the sad, silent father, every demonstration of rebellious sorrow, and sustaining herself and him with steady, self-governing firmness.

The routine of farm business was resolutely resumed, and Austin carried his trials and burdens with him to his patient labors in the field, with strugglings and strivings which none might witness; wrestling with his great sorrow, and seeking for strength and comfort where alone it could be found.

In the faithful discharge of every relative duty, and in the unremitting and conscientious endeavor to discipline his feelings, he found all the consolation he could yet hope

for looking up, from his lonely occupations in the meadows or the woods, amid the soothing influences and quiet repose of the works of his Heavenly Father, to Him who had afflicted him ; and feeling, and acknowledging, that, though " His ways were past finding out," He was yet over-ruling all for good ; and saying, though with faintings of heart and tears, " It is good for me to be afflicted ;" " Thy will be done."

It was the day succeeding the succession of rainy days which had been so sad and dreary in their silent home, and Ailsie and Anna had been out, for the first time, to trace the last steps of the children, going first to Dick's, to weep with poor, desolate Mary, in her home of hardships and heart trials, of which few knew the bitterness. Living with, and loving her grand-parents, who, with all their brutalizing self-indulgences, had never a frown or a harsh word for her, her heart was heavy with trouble, and her face flushed with shame, as she witnessed the degradation and misery into which every day they were plunging deeper. She shrunk from the prospect of deprivation and poverty which was darkening and thickening around her. For herself, young strong, and active, she had no fears. She knew she could find employment, and compensation, and a pleasant home, in many a kind family, but she could not leave them now in their helplessness, with their ruinous propensities aggravating the infirmities of age, and sharpening the sting of consequent destitution.

Shrinking with fear and dread, from the loose, immoral associations which were the attendants upon their vices ; shunning, as much as possible, all intercourse with those whom similarity of vicious pursuits called around her humble home, and almost cursing in her heart the grasping

wretch who catered for their sins and swept away their substance, poor Mary struggled on, looking and longing for the time when Lyman should have strength and judgment to understand her trials and relieve them. That hope was lost and swallowed in his unknown and untimely bed of death; and Mary wept, and there were few to comfort her. What, and who was poor Lyme Brown? and who cared for old Dick and Judy?

So they drained and replenished their jugs, and slept, and drained, and replenished again. One came and brought a little, and another came and borrowed a little; some came in kindness to comfort and aid Mary, and remonstrate with Dick, and reason with Judy; but he had his "rumytiz," and she had her "spells," and when the jug had been a recent journey to be filled, their attacks were excruciating to behold. And Mary worked, and washed, and mended, and cleaned, and kept things in order as well as she could, and read her Bible and Union Hymn Book, and sung when she had a heart to sing; and sometimes her visions of the future were brightened by glimpses of a clean, new little bit of a gem of a home, into which she felt sure that Sam Listen would never bring any jugs. Then she took courage, and worked and scoured, and made things look bright and pleasant, and kept the old folks tidy, and the lowly roof was hallowed that sheltered a spirit so patient, and honest, and true.

Mary wept now, over this fresh and crowning drop in her cup of sorrow. Lyman, her young brother, who, though thoughtless and uncurbed, was affectionate, and gentle, and helping to her, doing her errands and little out-of-door chores cheerfully, saving her many weary steps, and sparing her much exposure—always bringing some

little item of news to chat about and beguile the loneliness of her home—always there with his kind good-night and his merry morning song—Lyman, away ! and forever ! The hopes she had built upon him, the joys she had shared with him, the fears, the trembling anxieties she had sometimes felt for his future, were all gone down with him under the deep, dark waters, leaving a blank in her existence there was nothing now to fill.

The meeting between Mary and her afflicted neighbor was fraught with painful emotions, and they clasped hands in tearful silence, not the less expressive that it was wordless. Judy, who, fortunately, had drank herself dry, "*was* Judy," and sat industriously knitting before the door, watching the while, impatiently, the road along which Dick was to come with the newly filled jug.

"This 'ere's a 'mazin' heavy blow, Miss Elsy, to all on us, but th'aint no help for 't, an' I tell Mary we'd orter try'n make the best on't. Th' aint but dretful little comfort, I tell her, in this world, take one time with another, and see'n's taint but little while we've got to stay here. I tell her, says I, 'Mary, 'taint a' no use a-takin' on so,' 'cause you see, Miss Austin, we can't differ nothin'. You know Mary, she's young yet, poor child, and sh'aint niver had no trouble nor nothin', an' she sot no eend o' store on poor Lyme, so we all on us did for that matter, we did ; but I tell her, b'then she got to be s'long in years as I be ef she's spared, she'll find it's a dretful onsatisfyin' world, even to them's gets the best on't, and that aint poor folks in a gin'-ral way. But how does you'n Isaac stan' it? 'Mazin' bore up, I spose. Well, it beats me what religion does for some folks, but 'taint for all on us to get the comfort out on't you'n Isaac does ; more's the pity, s'I tell Dick."

No one felt disposed to cut short the thread of Judy's discourse; so she went rambling on till she dropped a stitch in her knitting, and her talk at the same time, when she rose, and rolled her great body into the kitchen to look up her spectacles, and Mary spoke:

"You have no hope of ever hearing anything? You don't think there's much chance that we shall ever know any more than we do now?" asked she, of her kind neighbor.

"I have very little expectation, Mary, that we ever shall—and still, I do sometimes feel as if it might be possible. I wish I did not have such longings, Mary, for I know there is no reason in such thoughts."

"It is very natural to have them, I am sure. They will come to me, and I can't help thinking what Uncle Lester said, might be. What do you think?"

"It is very hard, Mary, for a mother to reason, and consider, and calculate probabilities as coolly as those who feel no interest beyond common kindness. I do dwell, more than I ought, upon what might be, instead of schooling my heart, as I should, to bear what is." And Ailsie wept, and there was none to reprove or comfort her; for Anna could not see any sin in such unmurmuring grief, and Mary, in the indulgence of her own sorrow, forgot everything but sympathy for one thus doubly afflicted.

"It is very hard, very hard, Miss Ailsie, but think of me, and remember the blessings you have left. Oh, you don't know what a dismal thing it is, to be worse than alone, as I am, when our folks are as they are too much of the time; to come to the table with them when they can't help themselves, and to stay here day in and day out, with nobody to say a word to me; scared to pieces for fear some-

thing dreadful will happen to 'em, and afraid to go to bed and leave 'em, when I know, if the house should get a fire, I never could get 'em out, and I can't sleep for listening. And then the thought of poor Lyman! Oh, then I realize how much comfort and company he was to me! But I try to make the best of it, and to remember who it is that has put all this upon me; and I think of that beautiful sermon Mr. Alden preached the last time I went to meetin'. the Sunday after your Lucy died, from the text, 'As thy day, so shall thy strength be;' and I do try to be patient, but I can't always."

"It is right to try, and you must not doubt, Mary, that you will receive the grace and strength you ask for. We all know that our afflictions do not spring from the dust, and that, hard as it is to bear them, it is right and needful that we should. I know I don't—I can't; it is a great trial even to try; but I know too, Mary, for I have felt before now, that rightfully and trustingly sought, strength and peace will come."

"I hope so, Miss Ailsie. I am sure if it wasn't so, folks could not get along and live under the trials some have, and I shall try not to give way too much. If you and Mr. Isaac can bear your troubles, I ought to try to bear mine. If it was not for this last, what I used to call trouble would not seem like much; but now it is so aggravating to think them that he thought so much of, can do as they do; they don't feel as I do; if they did, they couldn't." And at the idea of cruel forgetfulness of her brother, her tears flowed forth afresh.

"Sakes alive, Miss Austin! you aint a-goin', be you?" said Judy, shuffling back into the room as Ailsie and Anna were about leaving. "Well, th'aint much to stay for here. Don't suppose we should a seen nara one on you to'ow

house at all, ef 'twant jist as 'tis ; but I's gwine to tell you how I've a bin handled, long back. I've a bin a havin' one o' my spells—it ralely was wonderful bad ; an' Dick, (you know what Dick is,) he'd a gone an' drunk up all the meder-sun. I allus try to keep jist a swaller tucked away agin my spells, but tha' wa'nt a speck in the jug, and it's a maricle o' marcy how I stood it till'st Dick got back. Ah ! well, I see you're in a pucker. Well, well, 'taint no matter about sich a poor body as I be. Do come agin, as iver you kin."

Judy gave one long look along the road, and then resumed her knitting, interjecting several self-condoling remarks upon the dilatory habits of Dick, and the dronish character of "the mare."

Ailsie and Anna took their way to the shore in silence, treading, with sighs and streaming tears, the road these little feet had traveled that last afternoon ; but they found no trace—the heavy rains had effaced their foot-prints, and their way upon the waters, alas ! had left no track.

They sat down upon the stones and looked over the bay, its waters lying so peacefully, the blue unruffled surface telling no tale of the fearful secrets oft-times before now buried in its bosom.

"Come, Anna, let us go. I have longed to do this, and I feel relieved ; but it will not be profitable to do it often. I must turn my thoughts away from earth. I must learn to look above, Anna, and feel as if my children were there. But I must teach my heart to do it ; it is not natural.

They turned toward home, walking on slowly, and pausing often to look around upon the fair fields, and skirt-ing woods, and scattering clumps of trees, through which they passed, Ailsie feeling almost the actual presence of her boys, amid the scenes through which they had so often

bounded. Before they reached home, they encountered Anna's father, Tom Belden, crossing the fields from his own home, and directing his course towards Austin's.

"I thought, Ailsie, I'd come and spend part of the day with you. The woman-kind our way have clubbed their forces and gone to Gosport a-tradin'; so I'd nothing to do but keep house, and it's dull work for such busy old chaps as Sam; so I put the great door key in my pocket and come off."

"It was the best use you could make of yourself, to come and see us. I am glad you could, though it won't enliven you much. It's a sad house you're come to, Tom," said Ailsie, pleasantly, and making an effort to speak cheerfully.

"Just so, Ailsie, just so; but I felt all the more like coming for that. 'It is good to go to the house of mourning,' for, 'by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better.' Where's Isaac?"

"At his work—always busy; he can't rest a minute, but keeps constantly occupied. It's well for him he can, for his heart is broke, and he hides it from me all he can. He'll be in at dinner-time, and I'm so glad you're here to talk with him a little."

They went in at the back door, as Ailsie concluded, and passed through the kitchen to the keeping-room, where the cool, refreshing breeze was tossing the chintz drapery at the windows, and sweeping over the strings of Jim's little wind-harp standing on the casement.

It was a sad voice, that low, wailing, melancholy music, to greet poor Ailsie. But she stepped resolutely in, removed the simple instrument, the work of those beloved hands, and closed the window.

"Now, Aunt Ailsie, you must sit down and rest, and let me help Hannah get dinner," said Anna, taking the sun-bonnet from her aunt's hand, and placing the great easy chair in the pleasantest position. "There, now, father, you must make yourself agreeable, and we'll soon have dinner."

Anna withdrew to concert measures with the "help" about striking up something nice for dinner; and Ailsie, as she tried to busy herself with her sewing, pursued her conversation with her brother-in-law.

"I can't tell you, brother Belden, what a comfort it is to me to have Anna with me. I feel it a great kindness in you to spare her, for I know your family is small, and you must miss her ready kindness in everything."

"I'm glad on't, Ailsie; if she can do you any good, keep her as long as you need her, poor child. I dare say it's a satisfaction to her, too. I can't say but that 'tis pretty dull with us sometimes, and I do miss my little singing bird; though as to the matter o' the singing, aunty, she ain't done much o' that lately," said Belden, carefully making basket-work over his fingers with a long stalk of knotted grass he had pulled on his walk, and casting a side-long, fidgetty glance at his pale auditor.

"I feel, brother Belden, as if there was a great deal of trouble up and down this earth, that man can't remedy, wherein we must read the providence of a mightier hand than his. It is a pity there should be any of man's making that might be spared——"

Ailsie hesitated and stopped.

"Go on. I spose I know what you are coming at.—Speak your mind freely, Ailsie. I'm willing to hear anything from you."

"It adds to my sorrow, Tom, heavy as it is, to see my sister's child growing every day thinner and paler, under a trouble she can't even speak about; for she's so patient and uncomplaining, it makes my heart ache for her. I wish you could feel it right to overlook that foolish affair that Harry Marvin got drawn into. It was a boyish mistake in judgment, and has done no hurt, except in its consequences to poor Anna."

"I aint sure but you're right, Ailsie. I've been debating the matter in my mind considerable smart, since the child has been here, and asking myself how I could get along with it, if she was gone not to come again, and I find I ain't so clear as I thought I was:" and he stripped the grass off his fingers with a twitch, and began weaving it again more earnestly than before. He was not the man to abandon his ground without a struggle. Meeting no reply, he went on:

"It want no such great matter 'after all. I don't think Harry had any sneaking, underhanded motives; he could not have, you know, for he owns quite a slice of Montauk himself, and if they'd a carried their pints 'twould a been all the worse for him, the gump. But he'd hear'd their big talk about the rights o' the many, and the oppressions o' the few, and liberty, and equality, and privileges, and republican principles, and old Smoker knows what all o' such 'lectioneering nonsense, and he got kinder worked upon, and he thought 'twould be great to be mighty public spirited, and go with the people. He did not look fur enough to see he was robbing Peter to pay Paul. But seein' it's all settled now, I reckon 'tis best to forget it, and not let it make life-time quarrels, and bad blood among neighbors."

"I am very glad to hear you say so, Tom Belden. I never could see the use in men's quarreling forever for so small a thing as a difference of opinion."

"Yes, but when men's opinions govern their actions, it's another matter. When they stick to their opinions, to the length of sticking their axe into their neighbor's timber, their sickle into his wheat, or their cows into his pastures, its time to rare up Auntie."

"Do you think Harry would ever have gone so far as that?" asked Ailsie, coming back to the point.

"I don't think he would. I've been thinking what poor Rachel, that's dead and gone, would say if she could speak for her darling. I know what she'd say well enough. She'd say 'examine yourself, Tom Belden. Don't say your prayers and go to bed in peace, till you've done it. Search out the matter, and see if you aint punishing your child with a heavy hand, when the fault's at your own door, the sin all your own obstinate temper.' I know that's just what she'd say, for it's what she has said many's the time about other things; and it's hard to make any unhappiness for her child, because the grave comes between me and her mother's voice. Its speaking in my conscience though, and I can't help but listen. And for her sake that's in her grave, and for yours, Ailsie, I must try and mend matters."

"I am too glad to hear you come to that determination; but don't do it to please me, if you think it is not right."

"I wouldn't do what I didn't think was right, to please anybody," said Tom, throwing the worn-out grass out of the door.

"I don't believe you would, brother Belden," replied Ailsie, with the least bit of a twinkle of the old times archness in her eye.

"I guess we won't say anything to Anna about all this talk. It wouldn't be strange if Harry took it into his head to be stuffy. He's got grit in him. Maybe he won't relish being whipped off and whistled back. But I'll go and see him as I tote along back, and if he's a mind to let it all go for what its worth, I'll send him along over here this evening."

The door opened as he concluded what he was saying, and Anna announced the arrival of her uncle, and the readiness of her carefully prepared dinner at the same time, and they assembled at the table. The long, homily grace was, par courtesy, nodded to Tom Belden; who branched off into much doctrinal and theological disquisition, edifying his hearers, and informing his Maker on very many subjects not immediately pertaining to dinner, which was meantime getting cold, much to the annoyance of Hannah, the cook. It was done at length, and conversation was kept up with some ingenuity by the kind-hearted visitor, with the zealous co-operation of Sam Listen, who was an indefatigable purveyor of news for home consumption.

"So you went to town last night, Sam," said Tom; "well, what news did you get? Anything stirring but strangers?"

"I did not hear any that I cared anything about," replied Sam; "they're all full o' politics, but it all goes one way with me. I aint old enough to vote; and if I was, I don't know nothin'. I went, hopin' what I'd no sort o' reason to; but I couldn't help hopin' I might hear somethin' about what we are all thinkin' most about. But 'twant no use; I might a known 'twouldn't be. Yes—I did hear one piece o' news that I cared not a copper for, 'cause my heart was full o' somethin else; but they was all chock full on't,

and didn't they talk? Martin Van Buren was there, and I don't know who all besides. Some of his sons, I reckon, they said."

"Martin Van Buren been in our town! he has, has he? Well he's the man of all others in this world I'd go furthest to see. I aint sure I wouldn't a-gone to town just to get a sight at him. I reckon he's about the greatest man we've ever raised in this country. If there'd only been men enough o' my mind, he'd a been President his life time, and rotation behanged."

Tom Belden was on his hobby now. If it had been any time for it, he would have taken a regular canter over the necks of everybody who stood between his idol and universal, life-lasting dominion. As it was, Sam quietly unhorsed him by introducing another subject:

"I heard 'em talking, too, about another thing, that I spose nobody thought poor Sam Listen had any ears for; but I had, for poor Jim's sake."

Ailsie lifted her sad eyes with an expression of interest, and Sam replied to the look.

"You know the books Jim was so took up with?—them't he read all over agin loud to me."

"The Wide, wide world," replied Ailsie, through her tears.

Yes. Well, I heard 'em talking in the store how the lady that writ them books was visitin' among the big-bugs, South-end, and it brought the tears to my eyes, when I remembered how much comfort Jim took in them books, and how bewitched he was to get t'other with the queer name."

"Poor boy!" said Austin, with a choking voice, "I got it for him at Gosport; it has never been untied."

"Jim was a smart boy at books," remarked Belden, shoving back his chair. "He never would have been contented to slave on a farm.; but he's provided for, in the Lord's own way. We must try to be reconciled, and trust it was for the best."

Sam returned to his work, and Austin remained in conversation with his friend, while Ailsie retired to her room, struggling to regain the composure and self-command the conversation had so painfully disturbed.

After an hour or two talking with Austin, and looking over his premises, Belden went home to unlock his house, and make ready for the return of the shopping deputation; and the shadows of evening began once more to gather over the quiet abode of Austin.

Anna and Ailsie were sitting with their work, in the little kitchen, in the fading twilight, when a quick, bounding step came up the path, and a hand was laid on the latch. Anna turned away, with a look of blank dismay, as the door opened, and Harry Marvin presented himself. With a nod to Anna as he passed, he advanced to give his hand to Ailsie, saying, with much emotion, as he did so :

"I have been wishing to come and see you ; but—"

"I understand all about it, Harry; I did not take it unkindly, and you will not doubt that I am glad to see you now," replied Ailsie, who very well understood what had sent him there.

"Anna, you are well, I hope."

"Very well."

Anna's ball rolled on the floor, and Harry picked it up and sat down beside her, entering, with some awkwardness, into conversation of no interest to himself or her, pitching her ball of yarn from one hand to the other, with

the most persevering assiduity, as though inconceivably amused and edified by the process; but it would not do. Anna had no idea of being betrayed into even a passive acquiescence in an act of disobedience, so she took her ball, and putting it in her pocket, quietly changed her seat, and took her position under the protecting wing of her Aunt's hood-backed chair, looking demure disapprobation at her daring admirer.

"You are very dutiful Anna; I am glad to see it. They say obedient daughters make obedient wives."

Anna looked surprised at Harry's levity, and wounded, perhaps, that he could take their separation so coolly.

"I am sure father will not believe that I have wilfully disobeyed his orders, or disregarded his wishes. I have been accustomed to submit to them; I shall not rebel now."

"I should be sorry if you did, Anna. These troublesome fathers are fractious fellows sometimes; but I hope you will not think of disputing your father's will, as, just now, his views and mine agree exactly; and he sent me down to talk with you, and see if you coincided with us."

"Did father tell you to come here, Harry?" asked Anna, almost disposed to do what she had never done before,—doubt the truth of Harry Marvin.

"He did. He said he had thought better of his determination, and that if you would give your consent, things might be again as they had been."

"Give my consent! How could father say such a foolish thing? Then you won't go to sea, Harry?"

"I don't know about that, Anna; I have put my hand to the ship's papers, and I should not like to back out. The

ship sails very soon, and it would make some muss ; besides, I have leased my farm, and been at some expense for my outfit. I am sorry it is so, but I think, since things have gone so far, I had better stick up to my engagements."

"I think you had, Harry. We are young, and three years will pass away less wearily now that we can look forward to a pleasant meeting at the end. But it is a sad thing to think about, to go so far, and be gone so long."

"It is a sadder thing, Anna, to be gone never to come again. Think of that, my child," said Ailsie, mournfully.

Austin came in, and drawing the little table towards him, took his Bible, and with a deep sigh bent over its pages. Sam Listen was beguiling the time over the pages of the "Observer," which, next to the Bible, was the household oracle in the community of Bayside. Harry and Anna were carrying on their conversation in a low tone about "the Islands," and "homeward bound ships," and "overland mails," and "California," and "China," and "Sandwich Islands," evidently planning for an interchange of letters, and seeking to occupy themselves with the pleasant features which presented in the prospect of their long separation. Ailsie had drawn her chair near the open window, and with her head resting on her hand, was lost in thoughts having little reference to what was passing around her. Suddenly she rose, and stood erect before her husband, with a pale face, exclaiming, in a startled, wild manner—

"Isaac! I heard Steenie's voice."

Austin looked up, alarmed for her reason, saying:

"Be composed, Ailsie ; you have been dreaming."

"I was fully awake as you are. I know I heard dear dead Steenie's voice," said she, with a determined air, and looking inquiringly around.

"Oh, Aunt, do sit down; you dropped asleep. You was dreaming," said Anna, fearfully alarmed.

"I was neither asleep, nor in any way unconscious. It might have come from another world, but there's no deceiving a mother when she listens with her heart. I heard Steenie's voice," she repeated, resolutely.

Carlo rose and came forward, whining, and looking wistfully at the door.

"I do hear a step. Its some of the folks come to see Hannah, I guess," said Sam Listen, shivering with ill concealed dread of he knew not what.

A quick step was now distinctly heard coming round the house.

"It's some stranger," said Austin, as a quick, loud knock, sounded at the front entrance. "Neighbors don't knock at that door." And taking a light, he proceeded to admit the applicant.

"It's Mr. Evelyn," said Sam, recognizing the voice. "He haint come here at this time o' night for nothing, I'll engage."

Sam's suggestions were cut short by the entrance of the gentleman himself. He paused an instant to give them time to prepare a little for his errand before he spoke:

"I have been to Gosport on some little business this afternoon, and I there heard of a boat having been picked up at sea answering the description of yours."

Here Carlo became very uneasy, making violent demonstrations of his determination to get out.

"I thought it would be some relief to you to know that the boat and the bodies have been found."

He quietly opened the door as he spoke, and Carlo bounded out with a yelp and a frisk.

"I knew I heard Steenie's voice. They are alive—they are here. I read it in your face," said Ailsie.

"You are right," said Evelyn. "May I let them in?"

But they could wait no longer. The door was flung open, and the boys bounded in, and were clasped in silent rapture in the arms of their parents; while Carlo frisked, and jumped, and barked, the noisiest of that happy group. Leaving the boys to tell their own tale, and explain all that had happened, Evelyn escaped as soon as possible from the expressions of gratitude with which they surrounded him, jumped into the wagon, and drove home with a heart overflowing with glad thanksgiving. Harry Marvin took his leave, to carry the glad tidings to Tom Belden's; and Sam Listen, taking Lyme Brown by the hand, took his way across the lots to Dick's.

The outpourings of grateful thanksgiving and praise ascended from the re-united family around the domestic altar that blessed night, beneath the roof of Isaac Austin. Jim's sweet, clear voice rose once more in their evening hymn, and Steenie's pleasant tones again blended with his mother's from his accustomed seat on her lap. Again and again were those beloved forms clasped with tears of blessedness to the hearts that ached with their fulness of joy.

"Oh!" said Anna, as she laid her head on her pillow, "this is too much happiness for one day. Shall I ever forget to render thanks to God for all his great mercies? Shall I ever again murmur at anything, or doubt, that in good time he will bring light out of darkness?"

Sam and Lyman walked on briskly till they came within a short distance of Dick's, when Sam ordered a halt, telling Lyme to remain without, and leave to him the

pleasant task of telling Mary the joyful news. The light was shining through the kitchen window, and Sam took a peep in before he entered. Mary was sitting by the little table, her Bible open before her, and tears coursing slowly down her cheeks as she bent over its pages. She wiped them hastily away as he entered, saying :

"What has sent you here at this late hour, Sam? Is anything the matter at your house?"

"No. But you see, Mary, I knew the old man had been to town, and I thought how it might be ; so, as I did not mind the walk this pleasant night, I thought I'd come and see. How is't with the old folks, Mary?"

"Just as it always is. They've both been sound asleep hours. It is sad, dull times, Sam, and now's the time I miss poor Lyman most of all "

"What would you give the man that could tell you just where he was now, Mary?" said Sam, with a queer, quizzical look.

"I would give all the little I have freely, Sam, to have him found and laid in a Christian's grave."

"Would you give yourself, Mary, to anybody that could tell you where he was, alive and well?" said Sam, with a peculiar laugh.

Mary was puzzled at Sam's behavior, but she answered his question :

"I feel now as if I would, Sam ; but if there was anybody that could tell me that it would make all difference. It would be hard to make me pay for such information as that."

"I shan't tell you till you promise," said Sam, giving her a familiar chuck under the chin. Mary retreated in dismay. Had she not trouble enough already, that this must be added? Could it be? Her heart sunk as she asked :

"Sam, what does possess you? Have you been drinking?"

"No, Mary, no! I have been hard at work all day. I came straight from home, and you know drink don't come under Isaac Austin's ruff, but somehow I feel sorter first-rate." And Sam whistled Yankee Doodle, and cut a corresponding caper. Mary was pale with agitation, and Sam saw it, so he sobered his exultant delight, and spoke seriously :

"Well, I can't help acting like a darned great fool, Mary; we've got glorious news, and it's all joy over to our house, and I couldn't help coming over to tell you. You'll stand it, Mary? You won't die for joy, will you?"

"I don't think I shall, Sam, if you never tell me."

"Well, if I open the door and let Lyme in, you won't be scared to death?"

The door opened without Sam's interposition, and Lyme walked in. Mary did not scream, nor faint, nor go off in interesting hysterics; but she flung her arms around her brother in tearful joy, and thanked God aloud and fervently. Sam danced, and whistled, and showed astonishing feats of agility in the overflowing joy of his honest heart; while Mary's feelings, as deep but less demonstrative, spoke in silent caresses and tears :

"Well, I'll go home; but you'll keep that promise you didn't make, all the same, Mary, if you don't want me to jump head over heels among the porpoises in the bay."

"We'll talk about that another time, Sam; I can't talk nonsense to-night."

Sam flung his hat out of the door, and jumped out, with a shout, after it, and the brother and sister were left alone.

"Mary, Mary, what on 'arth did you get up so airly for?" called Judy, from the front room.

"I have not got in bed yet, granny," answered Mary, stepping in with the light, and drawing near the bed.

"Oh, 'taint mornin,' hey? Well, I'm 'mazin' glad on't, for mornin' dreams allus goes contrary, an' I dremt how't I heard Lyme an' Sam Listen jabbering like all nater, 'long a you."

"Mebby you did, granny," said Lyme, looking in at the door.

"The marcy sakes alive! our Lyme! Be you alive? where on this varsal 'arth d'you come from?"

"I come from all sorts o' places, granny. I've brought back that han'kercher to read to you."

"That's a good boy! but you kin go ter bed, Lyme, 'cause I'm onwell, got one o' my spells," said Judy, drowsily. Joy itself could not overcome gin.

Seated in the old familiar spot, by Mary's side, Lyme entered into all the details of his perilous voyage, dwelling with earnest particularity upon his feelings, when in the hour of instant death he found that he could not command language for prayer.

"Oh, Mary, help me to be a good boy. Don't let me forget all the promises I made to myself that doleful night when I was adrift on the wide, wide ocean, and if it hadn't a been for Jim Austin, shouldn't a known as I could pray, or ever a thought o' one word to say. If you see me growin' forgetful, Mary, tell me of the time when I couldn't even say 'Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner,' till Jim told me, and when even little Steenie could teach me more'n I ever thought on afore. Don't let me ever think the time has come when I don't need to say that prayer, for I shall, more

and more, as long as I live." And Lyme renewed his promise of striving to lead a "godly, righteous, and sober life."

As to his success in his efforts, or his perseverance in making them, who shall answer? Since whatever is written opposite the name of "Lyman Beecher Brown," in the great "Book of Fate," can only be read as Time turns the pages.

CHAPTER XXV.

It was late before Evelyn reached home ; but he found Ernest awake, and Allen sitting by his bedside, waiting to hear the result of his mission.

"Come now, papa, tell us all about it. What did they say ? When you went in, were they frightened ? I am so glad."

"They did look startled when they saw me at the door, and I read fright on Sam Listen's face, notwithstanding his fierce whiskers. We had hard work to keep Steenie quiet, and his mother was almost wild before she knew anything, for she heard his voice down at the gate, and Carlo smelt out the secret, and was barking and tearing at the door when I went in. I was surprised that no one had taken the hint from him."

"What did Steenie do ? Did he behave like a hero ?"

"Steenie behaved very well. He knew before, you know, that he was alive ; it was no surprise to him ; but I did not stop to hear what they all had to say. I knew there must be joy enough where the lost are found, Ernest."

Evelyn felt, more keenly than he expressed, how deep must be that joy, as he looked on his own delicate child, and thought of that going from which there is no return ; but he put the thought away, remembering, that the parting

must yet come between those now so happily met, and that he and his should yet be gathered in a home from which they should go no more out.

"Now I can go to sleep so happy," said Ernest; "that choking pain is all gone from my heart, and I shall see the pleasant places of the earth look so bright and cheerful again. But where did you leave Lyme Brown?"

"Sam Listen took him in charge, and they were making the best of their way towards Dick's when I left."

"Well, I'll go to sleep now, and dream of pleasant things. So good-night, papa; good-night, mother, and all of you."

Ernest turned to his pillow, and composed himself to sleep with a peace and contentedness he had not known for many days, and the family separated for the night. Evelyn went to the kitchen to sit by the fire, for his garments were chilly and damp with the dew. To his surprise he found a grand illumination, and Dury busy in the compounding of sundry articles for the oven, in which a furious blaze was flashing, and streaming forth its long fiery tongues up the wide throat of the chimney, as if eager to devour the darkness frowning above.

"Why, Dury, what are you doing?—baking in the night?" exclaimed Alice, who entered at the same time.

"Beshur I be. Where's Miss Ally to git vittles, eff old Squaw don't bake sweetums?"

"I know, Dury, if we eat, we must cook; but you need not do it in the night."

"Don't Miss Ally worry; Dury can contrive. G'long to bed."

Dury kept on her course, preparing her pies and collecting the ingredients for her cake, asking no questions,

and desiring no instructions with regard to her proceedings. Setting down one thing after another as she brought them from the pantry, she enumerated the requisites on the table :

“Um gonger make reesen cake. Guess them’s all the grievances—flour, sugar, butter, cream, eggs, brandy, wine, reesons, citron, pu’lash, nutmage.”

Suddenly, she came to a dead stop. She had encountered a want for which she had not provided. She lacked an article she could in no case dispense with, without which, in her estimation, no sweet dish was complete.

Standing erect in her perplexity, with her arms dropped helplessly by her side, she solemnly put the question :

“What shall I do for sinnymint?”

“You will have to do without it, Dury,” said Alice, rejoicing in her heart that for once she could taste an article without it.

“Store’s shot up! Guh! niver thought o’ sinnymint!” soliloquised Dury, in great discomfiture.

“Try something else, Dury,” suggested Alice.

“Wont—nothin’ else do,” said Dury, catching up a cup and making for the door.

“But where are you going now, Dury? As you say, the store is closed for the night, and the neighbors are all in bed. Don’t go out for such a trifle; try something in the place of it.”

“I *will* have sinnymint,” said Dury, starting off with as rapid a movement as her nature admitted, to devise means for procuring what she was determined to have. Evelyn laughed, and Alice, though out of patience, could not help joining him.

“Dury has one of her national characteristics fully de-

veloped—unyielding, persevering determination is decidedly an Indian trait,” remarked Evelyn.

“It is a governing trait in Dury’s character, certainly ; and I’ve been told that it is a prevailing trait among the women of the Montauk tribe, to defer their domestic duties, particularly baking, till a late hour in the night.”

“Dury always defers doing everything she can, until after the family have retired ; whether it is because she feels more independent, or because her mind is more clear to meditate the mysteries of pies and puddings when she is less liable to have its operations disturbed, is a question I doubt if she can answer.”

Dury entered as Alice closed her reply, with a placid expression of solemn beatitude on her features, which was her nearest approach to a smile, and set down her cup with an air of grave triumph, only deigning to say, “Um got it.”

“Where did you get it, Dury ?” asked Alice, with some curiosity as to the lender upon which she had been levying.

“Old Squaw went all along ; niver see no light no was. When was comin’ back, see little speck through hole in curtin ; so, thumt on winder ; Miss Milly come, dreffle scared, and su’she, ‘whose tha.’ Says I, ‘s nobody ony ole Dury wants to borry sinnymint. Then she open door soffly, laugh dreffly. But I got sinnymint—I would have sinnymint—I know’d I would.”

Having achieved her purpose, Dury went on, silently rolling, and sifting, and beating—turning neither to the right hand nor to the left to ask direction or assistance, but planning and executing her work in her own fashion, and troubling herself with nothing beyond the sphere of her

own immediate duties, moving about her midnight baking with soft, noiseless tread; no sound ever breaking over her lips, no humming of tunes, no little snatches of songs, no breathings of involuntary heart's melody, was sober, staid Dury ever betrayed unseemly to indulge in. No laughter, no manifestation of merriment ever discomposed the corners of her mouth, or sent one twinkling beam to her downcast, melancholy eyes; but the same unvarying, silent immobility was always wrapped like a garment around her. Dury went on with her darling occupation, making "oven vittles"—occasionally pitching a little additional fuel into the oven, or giving the mass of burning coals a vigorous stirring and spreading, with her long pole; and Alice left her to her own devices, rejoicing to be the only waking working being beneath the roof.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE summer sun was passing away as it usually passes in Sea-spray, the farmers following the ordinary routine of labor as the season advanced. The gay season in the village was now at its height; carriages were constantly on the whirl, and arrivals and departures made the only change. The great study was amusement. "What shall we do this morning?"—"Where shall we go this afternoon?" were the great questions. "Who has come?" and "who has gone?" about the only items of intelligence; and "which house has the greatest number of boarders?" the great debateable subject. But while these things were enacting without, to the Evelyns the little matters of village or general interest were without attraction. The life in which their lives were bound, like the sweet summer flowers, was also passing away. Daily the feeble frame grew more feeble, the faint voice more faint, the pallid cheek more thin and pallid; and, as the earth receded, the soft eye became more soft and clear, the sweet smile more sweet, and the gentle heart more loving and gentle. Ernest was on his bed, from which he was no more to rise, calm, patient, and cheerful, suffering no pain, making no moan, but looking forward to his heavenly rest as the weary wanderer looks forward to the shelter and solace of

home ; comforting, with his trusting and hopeful words, the anguish of those who watched with never-ceasing care and sorrowing love beside him.

"Papa," said Ernest one evening, after lying for a long time looking silently out upon the moonlight glistening upon the dewy foliage—"Papa, the moon shines brightly now on Edith's grave, and it is still and pleasant on the hill ; and sometimes when I feel so weak and weary, I think how pleasant it would be to be there and rest close by her. What is the reason, that when I try to think and believe one thing, I can't help feeling another ? When I know that all I knew and loved of Edith was laid there, it is hard to bring myself to think of her anywhere else."

"But that better part of Edith, which knew and loved you, my son, you know is not sleeping there."

"Oh, no, papa, I know better than that ; but I can't always remember it. I have so many thoughts when I am almost dreaming. I think how glad Edith will be to see me ; and then I am talking to her with my fingers as I used to do ; and then I wonder if she will be as she was here ; or will she hear, and speak to me ? Never mind, papa, never mind, I know you can't tell. I should not trouble you with all my thoughts."

Evelyn pressed the dear, little, trembling hand, which, in the earnestness of his sorrowful self-condemnation, the child had laid on his. He sought to gain time for self-command, to calm the emotions which swelled his heart, as he listened to the remarks to which, in his guileless simplicity, Ernest almost unconsciously gave utterance. He paused ere he answered, hardly able to frame a reply to questions so difficult to solve, without disturbing and paining the delicate and sensitive feelings of his child.

"Oh, don't think about it, papa; never mind," he repeated, "I did not mean exactly to ask a question for you to answer; I was only thinking aloud. It's no matter; I knew nobody could tell about such things; but it is natural to have such thoughts, isn't it papa?"

"Yes, Ernest, it is natural; we all have thoughts we cannot satisfy. You are right, too, my son; they are questions which I cannot answer, for we have no explicit scriptural authority on which to build. It is right to take a pleasant and consoling view of such subjects; to indulge in anticipations of happy reunions with our departed friends. Even the resting-place of the blessed would be less one of blessedness without that precious hope."

"But shall we know each other? And how? For we shall not carry our earthly likeness with us. I think and think, papa, till I get troubled and lost, and almost frightened sometimes with wondering. How shall spirit know spirit?"

"We cannot judge, my son, how, when the veil of flesh is removed, and the faculties purified and purged from sensual and earthly dross, the imperfect shall become perfect, the clouded cloudless, and the darkness light; we can but hope and trust we shall know, when faith shall have become vision, and hope the realization of joyful fruition."

"But you know, papa, Dives knew Lazarus, even when he was afar off, and the great gulf was between them; and even in that ugly place of trouble he did not forget his old human and earthly affections, for he tried to send Lazarus to warn his brothers. Poor Dives could not have been all wicked, for his strong love for his friends was with him in the horrible pit. Isn't that proof, papa, that folks do know, and remember, and love after death?"

“I think it may be safely so considered.”

Ernest was silent, and sleep gradually stole over him. Ada was pacing the house, restless and wretched. It seemed that quiet and peace had utterly forsaken her, and that to be composed and still was impossible. Her health was failing daily, and her nervousness and trembling agitation were becoming too powerful for control. Her pale face was shrunk, and her features sharpened and shorn of their beauty. While Evelyn kept his position constantly beside the pillow of his child, watching with a love which mastered every other thought, conquering all emotion, staying all outward demonstration of grief, calmly and even cheerfully conversing with and sustaining him, supplying every wish before it was spoken, and answering every look, Ada wandered about without seeming aim or object, a helpless, hopeless spectre, seeking rest and finding none ; listening for awhile to the sweet, plaintive accents of her child, as he gave utterance to his thoughts and dreamy imaginations ; then wringing her hands, and starting wildly away, to pace with rapid and tottering steps from room to room, and turning again to look and listen ; hovering ever near and over him, but resting never calmly and composedly with ministering care and consolation by his couch. Absorbed in his devoted attention to his dying child, Evelyn had abandoned any attempt to restrain her waywardness ; and while he saw her sufferings and pitied them, and prayed with, and entreated, and soothed, and counseled her, he felt painfully how fruitless were all his endeavors to teach her submission, or to afford her relief. So day followed day, death drew near, and Evelyn watched, and was still and patient ; Ada saw it, and walked, and wrung her hands, and shuddered ; Ernest

felt it, and was not apalled ; but he looked in his father's face with a sweet, loving smile, and sought to comfort him with gentle words :

"It wont be long, papa. It seems like a little while to me, and I feel no trouble about it now, only that I am so sorry for you. You wont mourn, papa, so very much, when I am gone. You will come yourself when a few short earthly seasons are past. And mother will not be long in coming, for I see how she is growing thinner, and paler, and weaker, every day, and then you will be alone ; but you wont be lonesome, for you will have us all in your heart, and you will know where we are waiting for you. It is only that we have gone a little before."

Then the child would fall into a sweet slumber, or lie with folded hands, softly whispering his prayers. And so his little life flickered and faded ; he said little, but slept and smiled, and knew no suffering.

Evelyn watched, and he was not left alone in his sorrow : Allen was his almost constant attendant ; Mr. Alden looked in daily, with untiring kindness and offers of assistance and service ; and friends surrounded him ; for in kind, sympathizing Sea-spray, the prompting heart, the helping hand, and the silent, unobtrusive deed of gentle and loving ministrations, were never wanting.

Ada, in her desolation, found tender and soothing watchfulness, and assiduous attention and care from the fair matrons of the village. Ministering spirits among the affectionate beings in her neighborhood stood always near and around her, anxious to comfort and sustain ; but Ada's anguish was one which kindness could not soothe, nor human efforts reach with any hope of healing.

It was Sunday. The house was perfectly still. Ernest

was slumbering on his couch, Evelyn and Allen in silent watchfulness were bending over him. Ada, with more than her usual restlessness, had exhausted herself, and for a time was resting. Dury, as was always the case, was busy in her culinary operations; Alice and Leena improving the quiet of the hour to have a little consultation with her upon the state of affairs in her department. A quick sort of cantering step was heard in the dining-room, and to the dismay of the inmates of the kitchen, Mrs. Thorn presented herself with her ominous accompaniment, a willow basket of alarming dimensions, telling, in unequivocal terms, an intention to inflict herself upon them for several days. It was too provoking—but there was no help for it, she had come; and where Mrs. Thorn found it for her convenience or pleasure to tarry, there she tarried.

Mrs. Thorn was the terror of Sea-spray housekeepers, among whom she had established a sort of accidental acquaintanceship, in consequence of having had at some remote period of "long, long ago," a son at school, and boarding in the place. The boy had been shifted from family to family, as one after another became aware of the visiting propensities of the mother. But there was no shaking off Mrs. Thorn, and she continued to visit and victimize till there was scarcely a family in the township exempt from her intrusions. She had enlarged and extended her operations, till she now contrived to spend about every third year among her helpless dear friends in Sea-spray, trotting about with her basket, and always bringing with her the certainty of one season of gladness in prospective. Mrs. Thorn was, according to her own phraseology, "a smart-minded woman;" and as she had been at different periods of her life connected with almost

every denomination, she was armed at all points, and her array of sectarian battle axes and bludgeons was fearful. Entering with her basket on her arm, her first salutation was :

“Here, you, where shall I put this?”

“On the floor,” replied Leena, with determined discourtesy.

“What! in the kitchen? I want it put where it will be safe, it’s full of my best things. Who occupies this little back bed-room opening from the dining-room?”

“Not any one. Put it there, if you please,” said Alice, with a little propitiatory civility, to atone for Leena’s wilful want of it.

“Well, you don’t ask me to take off my bonnet. I shan’t wait to be asked, for I want to go to five o’clock meeting, and I intend to get my tea here. Dury, just step out and bring in my things, the boy took them out of the wagon and set them down at the gate.”

There was a faint hope shadowed forth in the remark, though the great basket did not furnish a very available peg to hang it on, that her intentions were not so merciless as they seemed; and Mrs. Thorn proceeded to divest herself of bonnet and shawl, and deposit them on the bed in the little room she had so unceremoniously appropriated to her own use.

“Come, now, do get me a veil, or large light handkerchief, to spread over my bonnet,” called Mrs. Thorn.

“Take your shawl,” said Leena.

“I don’t want my shawl specked any more than my bonnet. Why don’t you keep your rooms dark? It’s very poor management to have blinds opened in the day time. I thought you were snigger housekeepers.”

"It would be pleasanter if we could keep cool and shaded," said Alice, making an effort to be civil, to counteract, as far as in her power, the cloud of wrath which she saw gathering sternly on Leena's countenance, "but we have a large family, and our rooms are in constant use; they are necessarily open."

"Well, I suppose you see company somewhere. Where shall I sit?"

"Anywhere you please. Our business just now is in the kitchen; if our company is any inducement, you can come in here."

"What, by this great fire? That's no great treat this hot weather."

"We like to give our friends a warm reception," said Leena, as Mrs. Thorn passed along, looking for a comfortable position by the open window.

"What, baking on the holy Sabbath day?" exclaimed the visitor, as she espied Dury's tin kitchen baker before the fire. "I am surprised at such heathenism. You must have neglected your proper duties, or you would have made better provision for the holy Sabbath than this. When I was a housekeeper I always had my cooking done on Saturday. I feel called on to reprove such disregard of the Sabbath. I am very strict myself in the observance of it."

"It is right of course to be so," replied Alice, speaking promptly, to prevent an explosion elsewhere; "but we are peculiarly situated at present, our family is large and very irregular, and we have necessarily a number up all night, who need refreshments. It is sometimes out of the question to calculate to a fraction the extent of the demand, or of our resources to meet it."

"Thought Miss Thorn knowed sickness made work enough 'thout comp'ny," said Dury. "Well, folks wants ter eat eff 'tis Sabby day, an ivery one't comes makes one more."

Mrs. Thorn did not notice Dury's unequivocal hint, but proceeded to catechise her with regard to her views on various doctrinal points, and faithfulness in the discharge of sundry duties pertaining to her situation.

"Dun no what Miss Thorn means by all her minister talk. I allers tend to do as near right as I kin," said Dury, keeping steadily about her occupation.

"I hope you don't think it's right to be making bread, instead of going to meeting? If you do, I don't."

"Yis, marm, I do. I feels eff 'ts right to do my duty jess as much Sabby day as iny other day; as eff 'ts right to mind my own business. Why can't Miss Thorn mind hern?"

"It is my business to reprove sin and ungodliness wherever I find it," said Mrs. Thorn, severely.

"Du to me, I would'n go runnin' about to look it up, tho," said Dury, hanging over her tea-kettle.

"I am glad you are going to get tea early. I should like to have it before five o'clock meetin' time," said Mrs. Thorn, who was keenly alive to the enjoyment of all creature comforts.

"We don't niver have tea afore seven o'clock; taint likely we shill to-day," said Dury, with an inward chuckle at Mrs. Thorn's fallen countenance.

"Well, I am very particular about my tea. I will have a cup of weak Bohea."

"Wonder eff Miss Thorn thinks we have ivery think? We don't keep no sich tea in the house."

"Well, can't you borrow it in the neighborhood? Just run out and see."

"Our folks don't send out borryin' Sabby day. Shun' think Miss Thorn'd think on't."

Mrs. Thorn persisted in her demand, and Dury as resolutely resisted; and Mrs. Thorn devised another plan.

"Lend me a cup, Dury, and I will go myself. It is every body's duty to take care of their health."

So Mrs. Thorn made her reverence for the "holy Sabbath" yield to the preferences of her palate, making her health the plea for gossiping about the neighborhood, from house to house, in search of her favorite tea. Greatly to Dury's delight her search was unsuccessful.

The bell rung for the service at five o'clock, and Mrs. Thorn cantered off, leaving particular directions with Dury not to "draw" her tea too long, nor to make it "too strong." She did not like tea reduced, but wished it made of the desired strength at first.

"Won'r eff Miss Thorn thinks um gonter spile master's tea to please her? I ain gonter nohow;" and Dury made her tea a degree beyond the ordinary quality, muttering about her work, "Don't see what sich folks was made for. Nothink to do but meddle with what don't concern 'em. Hot in our kitchen! Guh! there's hotter places. Shoun' care eff Miss Thorn was in 'em. Hope she'll paddle off after supper."

Poor Dury was "taking up with a false hope," to use one of Mrs. Thorn's favorite expressions, as applied to matters of more consequence than the departure of an unwelcome and disagreeable visitor.

In due time "meeting was out," and Mrs. Thorn returned in great trepidation, lest tea should be over, to give orders as to what she should eat.

"I can't eat fresh bread, Dury; I will take a bit of toast. Make it nice and brown, and I will prepare it to suit myself. I find it necessary to be very particular."

"Aint got no bread to make toast on. Miss Thorn might knowed that."

"Well, run into Mrs. Fuller's and get a slice. I must have it."

"Our folks don't borry Sabby day niver, no how."

"Then you can make just a nice little bit of johnny-cake for me. I like Indian cookery very much," said Mrs. Thorn, coaxingly.

"Can't do no onnecessary cookin' Sabby day, no how."

"But I must have something to eat, that will agree with me, my stomach is so weak."

"Them as carries sich troublesome stomachs, orter carry their own vittles, ef they go visitin' Sabby day," said Dury, determined to fight the dictatorial visitor with her own weapons.

Notwithstanding Dury's contumacious behaviour, Mrs. Thorn contrived, by exploring the pantry, to provide for herself a meal to her liking, without imposing any endangering tax upon her stomach, beyond the digesting of an unconscionable quantity of heterogeneous substances; and tea passed over without any violent clashing between her and Dury.

"I suppose," said Mrs. Thorn after tea, "where there are so many, one more won't make much difference. You were so late about having tea that I can't think of going out in the dew. I shall pass the night with you. Where am I to lodge? I am very particular about my bed. I should like to see to the arrangement of it now, if you will attend to it."

"You can take the room where you put your basket," said Alice, indifferently.

"What! and sleep down stairs alone? I am not in the habit of sleeping in a room by myself. I often want attention in the night, and I am timoursome. I must be in the room with some one."

"I am sorry we cannot make things more agreeable, Mrs. Thorn, but we have no other apartment unoccupied. Our rooms are full. Our house is full of suffering and sorrow, and we cannot devote any time or attention to other claims. We can give you a bed and a shelter, but we have no ambition at present to make our house pleasant to visitors. Our friends will have to take us as they find us, if they come to see us."

Mrs. Thorn made no reply, but mounted the stairs on an exploring expedition among the sleeping apartments above, trotting from room to room, in quest of quarters to suit her.

"There are two beds in all the rooms. I should like to know who occupies them, that I can't have one of them," said Mrs. Thorn, indignantly. "Who has the room over the dining room?"

"It's mine, to have and to hold, and to make fast against all invaders," said Leena, stoutly.

"It's a large room, with two beds. You don't sleep in both, I suppose," said Mrs. Thorn. "Why can't I have one?"

"Because Alice has it," said Leena.

"Then, surely, there's room enough with one of you for me," said the unflinching intruder, determined to carry her point.

"There's trouble enough in the house now; it would be wanton wickedness voluntarily to plant a Thorn upon our

own pillows. It's a thing not to be spoken or thought of," said Leena, with an air of audacious resolution.

"There's a cot in the next room, then ; you can bring that through into your room for me."

"If you are determined to give us the pleasure of your company, I suppose that can be done," said Alice, willing to get along with an unavoidable annoyance as easily as she could ; "and if you will tell just what you will have done, I will attend to it."

So Mrs. Thorn again mounted to the chambers, and gave very minute directions as to how her bed should be arranged, taking especial good care not to put her own hands to the work, but watching and ordering the folding and spreading of blankets and comfortables, till everything was done to her entire satisfaction. She then descended to the kitchen in quest of Dury, giving orders to have a bathing tub and water taken to her room, with all sorts of napkins, and means, and appliances for a comfortable bath.

"I aint gonter do no sich thing. Um got enough to do eff I do what b'longs to me, an wait on them as can't wait on themselves. Looks likely our folks wants poor old Dury to do all that are onnecessary work Sabby' day. When does Miss Thorn think Dury's gonter git time to say her prayers. I can't do no sich thing. I won't, so there."

Dury's wrath was roused, and language in indignant volubility came from her usually silent lips.

"Well, well, Dury. If you can't and won't, you needn't be so touchy. I must try to do without it ; but I always take a bath when I can."

"Wha's Miss Thorn to do when she can't," growled Dury.

Mrs. Thorn did not deign any reply, being intent upon effecting an entrance into the room where the family were

holding their wordless watch around the couch of Ernest. But watchful eyes were upon her—all her attempts were fruitless; and her only chance for bringing her battery of polemical divinity to bear upon any one, was based upon the hope of capturing Ada, as she occasionally glided restlessly through the apartment. But Ada could not stop to give heed to anything she had to offer; and Mrs. Thorn could only look unutterable condemnation, and express with a shake of the head, which conveyed volumes of rebuke, her entire disapprobation of her course. All arrangements were made for the night, for sharing and cheering Evelyn's watch by Ernest; Ada was persuaded to retire, and the household prepared to separate, to rest while they could. But Mrs. Thorn was not ready; "she chose to sit up. She was not sleepy. It was the pleasantest time to talk. She did not sleep as well to retire before she was sleepy."

"Is this the way you go to bed in this house, Dury? Don't you have prayers?"

"Be shu', we do. Gentleman reads prayers in gret room, and our folks allus goes in; but 'spose little boy's so low now he can't leave him, and they all says they own prayers."

"I am in the habit of leading in prayer in families, when I am asked. I would do it here, if I was requested," said Mrs. Thorn, with the air of an injured individual.

"Hadn't Miss Thorn just lives watch?" asked Dury.

"Anybody can watch," said Mrs. Thorn, with a contemptuous toss of her head.

"Thought good book said must watch as well as pray. Our folks watches. Don't Miss Thorn think them that watches prays too, eff they don't tell ivery body on't?"

Mrs. Thorn was too indignant at the slight put upon her

powers to make any reply; and finding Dury utterly impracticable, she withdrew to her chosen quarters, whither Leena and Alice had preceded her. The attack, so unsuccessful upon Dury, was vigorously renewed upon her silent room-mates, who quietly laid their heads upon their pillows and uttered not a word.

Mrs. Thorn disrobed, muttering, as she did so, many unmistakable hints about being requested to "lead in worship;" but finding she could elicit no reply, she got into bed with an angry flounce, and taking her snuff-box and handkerchief with her, sat up in her bed snuffing and scolding.

"Yes, I know how 'tis; some folks are too proud to ask a woman to conduct family worship. I have done it in very intelligent families. It's oftentimes the case that women are more gifted in prayer than men; they have more nearness and freedom of approach; they have a more intimate knowledge of the wants, and requirements, and deficiencies of families, and a quicker eye to discern spiritual dearth and petty sins, and short comings among their acquaintances. They have a better understanding of the scriptures, and are oftentimes more thoroughly indoctrinated; but there's none so deaf as them that won't hear," and Mrs. Thorn put out the light, and lay down with an angry impatient grunt, and was soon sound asleep.

With the earliest beam of light, Mrs. Thorn was on the move, determined to do her duty toward the heathenish family upon whose hospitality she had so courageously intruded. Rolling up the shades to let in the light, and raising the windows for the admission of the chill, dewy air of the yet misty dawn, she took her seat between the beds, and read, first, in a twanging and disagreeable tone, aggravated perhaps by her preposterous application of "yellow Scotch,"

one or two chapters from the Bible. Then followed the "execution" of a hymn of seven or eight stanzas, in a cracked, unmelodious voice, which poured out at the open window in a yell of discordant vocality, scaring sleep from the drowsy denizens of the barn yards, and waking a noisy response from rails and roosts. This feat accomplished,—then came the crowning performance, upon which Mrs. Thorn built her claims to pre-eminence as a leader and expounder of all questions, doctrinal or scriptural. Under the misnomer of prayer, she poured forth a long discursive, declamatory harangue, full of objurgatory expostulations, and with much modest and meritorious self-abnegation, humbly suggestive of much needed reforms, with well meant hints as to available expedients for removing days of darkness and spiritual declension, and for bringing to irrecoverable rout and overthrow, all sorts and denominations of doctrinal heresies, particularly "New Schoolism," "Formalism," "Methodism," and "Romanism," with all its ramifications and scarlet abominations—a prolix homiletical epitome of her own peculiar system of theological polemics, without one supplicatory cry for grace or guidance for the future, or one penitent petition for pardon for the past.

The flowing out of Mrs. Thorn's opinions, when she had finished, was nothing more nor less than a labored argument, setting forth the claims of her own sectarian views to especial favor and supremacy, and a showing of reasons cogent and incontrovertible, why all others should, with their allies, Sin and Satan, be cast down and trodden under foot. Having achieved her purpose of being heard in her peculiar gift, Mrs. Thorn, with smiling self-complacency, commenced the pleasing ceremonials of arranging her morning toilet, spattering and splashing the water over fur-

niture and carpet, with all the recklessness of a dusty duck in the first fluttering dive of aqueous delectation. There was no more hope of sweet morning slumber, when Mrs. Thorn was awake, for she had always at command a superabundance of words, which must find delivery, and they came crowding and jostling each other to the passage, so that she was obliged to weave her talk, as she could, with two threads, the warp being carefully stretched for the edification of her hearers, while the woof consisted of little demi-voice asides, shot in here and there promiscuously for her own benefit.

“Now, I always make it a point when I am visiting about among my friends, to observe how they manage their domestic affairs, and I am often-times enabled to point out to them their deficiencies in many little matters, which might be very profitable to them, if they would receive reproof in a teachable spirit—(where is the soap?) There’s none so wise but that they might learn, and I have vanity enough to believe that I know some things it wouldn’t hurt you—(well I’ve made my foretop look very becoming,) to know too. I think it is very improper for you to have these strangers in your house, taking up your time, and giving you so much care, night and day, (there goes a button!) so that you have no time to entertain your friends. I had calculated on spending several weeks with you, for I expect (I guess this cap is clean enough till after breakfast) Mr. Thorn in a few days, and I had written (gingham apron, this morning) to him, to come here, for I knew (shan’t need any collar) you had a small family, and could make it (plaid cravat) pleasant, if (now what have I done with my pin?) you would. It is quite a disappointment, (I wonder who gets breakfast,) for Mr. Thorn is very particular,

and he dislikes the worry of children, (I wonder they don't go down,) and I don't know now where to take him (I shall be faint.) I think you are very easy housekeepers. What time, pray, do you have breakfast?"

"Any time we choose. Probably before noon," replied Alice, proceeding leisurely with her dressing. "We are never early; and just now, we particularly wish to keep the house quiet in the morning. Ernest rests best then, and it is about the only time his father has to sleep at all."

"Well, that may be right, (they are not all the world), if you have no other duties; but you might have breakfast for those who want it. (I'll just pick up my clothes for the wash.) I'm used to having mine as soon as I am up. (I'm afraid Dury'll fade this.) I feel the worse all day if I am kept waiting. Don't you go down to see to getting up breakfast?"

"When I think it is necessary. There will be nobody up these three hours."

"If that don't beat!—nobody up in three hours! What's Dury about (the impudent hussy) all the morning, if you never have breakfast?"

"She finds enough to do. She is never idle, nor behind time."

"I should call it behind time, making bread on the holy Sabbath day," said Mrs. Thorn, with a shake of solemn condemnation.

"Since you are so much annoyed at our misdeeds, Mrs. Thorn, I will make an explanation, which I did not conceive you had any right to demand. One of our kindest and most obliging neighbors was sick Saturday, and her family discomfited and disarranged. We sent her a small supply of provisions for a day, and supplied our own deficiency by making more on Sunday. If there was any sin in the

act, it need not distress you, inasmuch as it was no business of yours, and you can in no shape be held accountable."

"I should hold myself accountable for my own shortcoming in duty, if I failed to be instant in season in rebuking the shortcomings I see in families where, in the providence of the Lord, I am sojourning. Your thinking it was none of my business, does not justify me in putting my light under a bushel. I dare say you thought you was doing a kind, neighborly act; such things are oftentimes done without right reasoning. Small things lead to great sins, and a little mistake may oftentimes open the way to great backslidings and perversion of sound orthodox doctrine. Now, if it was not high time for you to go to getting breakfast, (I may as well get my knitting work,) I think I could set forth this thing in its doctrinal bearings, very much to the enlightenment and enlargement of your views. I hold that 'charity begins at home,' and that disregarding that principle led to Sabbath-breaking. (I smell coffee.) Now, it is oftentimes—(six o'clock)——"

"Oh, Mrs. Thorn, if you have got upon the oftentimes thread of discourse, there will be no end to you, and I can't even wait to hear the heads," said Leena, who had been preserving profound silence under all the modes and forms of Mrs. Thorn's devotional, doctrinal, and admonitory attack. "You will excuse my attendance upon the remainder of the lecture, or you will have to dispense with breakfast an hour or two longer."

"I will go with you, for I must attend to having my breakfast prepared myself. Your food yesterday did not agree with my stomach at all; and that saucy creature, (I wonder they keep her, to be impudent to visitors,) Dury, would not take any trouble to attend to my wishes."

So Mrs. Thorn, knitting-work in hand, descended to the kitchen, to reconnoitre and take cognizance of all matters having relation, directly or indirectly, to the solemn and weighty subject then nearest her heart—her stomach, its immediate gratification and subsequent digestion."

She found Dury busy with her churn, and in a more placable humor, having had remarkable luck in her butter-making operations, which she attributed in a great measure to the exorcising powers of a bunch of horse-shoes, which had been from time to time suspended in the pump-room, where she conducted her operations in warm weather. With grim glee she volunteered to compound, for Mrs. Thorn's especial benefit, a rich buttermilk johnny-cake, which proposition the mollified lady most cordially acceded to, that being one of the most palatable, and at the same time innocent, edibles of her acquaintance.

The belligerents thus brought into amicable relations, matters progressed breakfastward very pleasantly, and Mrs. Thorn indulged in much common-sense chat with Dury about sundry culinary mysteries, in which she was constrained condescendingly to admit, that—

"Though she did not often turn her back to the best of housekeepers in the way of cooking, yet there were some dishes in the preparing of which, somehow, she could never quite come up to the Indian women."

"Ingen wimmen, guh! that's great. Why don't Miss Thorn say Squaw?" said Dury, with a toss of her head, indicating great contempt for the unwonted courtesy. "Ingens allus says Squaw. White folks needn't trouble. Ingen wimmen! Guh, that's mighty."

In due time the family assembled in the breakfast-room, where, much to Mrs. Thorn's discomposure, and not with

out sundry restive manifestations on her part, Evelyn read the usual morning service, Mrs. Thorn standing bolt upright before the open window see-sawing, and apparently profoundly absorbed in counting a huge flock of fowls in Captain Melton's yard.

Ernest was reported to have had a favorable night, and was refreshed and comfortable. Ada came down from her room looking composed and revived, and matters wore a more than ordinarily cheerful aspect. So Mrs. Thorn was suffered to toddle about the house, peeping and prying into all its arrangements, reproving and reprimanding with full license, for nobody was in the humor to regard her ill-bred captiousness.

After examining everything, and passing a general vote of censure for inconvenience of arrangement, faultiness of construction, and glaring disregard of economy, Mrs. Thorn made another descent upon the kitchen, bringing with her a bundle of soiled wearing apparel.

"What, Dury! not got to washing yet? and this such a fine day. You ought to have your clothes out by this time. I suppose I can have some washing done here, if you ever get ready to begin?"

"I ain gonter wash to-day," replied Dury, walking out, without further comment.

"Not wash Monday?" said Mrs. Thorn, seeking Alice in the dining room; "I thought everybody washed Monday the world over. Do you have any system about anything in your house-keeping?"

"Yes," replied Alice, "we are very systematic in doing just as we please. Have you any objections to urge?"

"Yes, to be sure I have. I depended upon having my washing done here, and it puts me out in my calculations.

I can't be tugging a basket of dirty clothes from house to house. Besides, I have put off having any washed till I got here, and I shall need them. Why don't you wash Monday?"

"We don't wash at all in the house. We don't want the bother and confusion of such work. Our great object is to be quiet, and to avoid all disturbance in and about the house. We feel deeply interested for the friends who are suffering under our roof, and for the dying child, who is a favorite and pet with us all, and we can't be troubled with any work that can be dispensed with."

"I dare say it is all just as you say, but you can't expect me to give way to such notions. I hold it to be a Christian duty to submit."

"It is very easy to submit to the afflictions of others," said Alice. "I am sorry if you are put to inconvenience."

"Oh, it won't be much. I guess Dury will find time in the course of the day to do my washing. Just to rub out a dozen pieces or so. I will go and tell her about it, for I don't like to have my dresses faded."

"You can send your clothes out, Mrs. Thorn, if you choose. We send ours out, and have them very nicely done."

"What, send my wash out and pay by the piece? It will be after to-day that I do that."

Mrs. Thorn again sought Dury, and gave her very explicit orders about her work. This must be blued, and that must be starched, and that dried in the shade, and that laid on the grass, and this must not be wrung, and that must not be rinsed, and so on to the end; which, having done, she took her bonnet and umbrella, and announcing her intention of returning soon, went out to make calls.

CHAPTER XXVII.

"WHAT shill I do, Miss Ally, with these ere duds? Shill I go at 'em."

"Pack them up, Dury, and take them to Mrs. Edmonds. Tell her, as near as you can, all that Mrs. Thorn directed; have them washed, ironed, aired, and mended even, if they require it, and charged with our account. Mrs. Thorn is a general nuisance, but we have as little plague with her as most folks, and may as well bear our share of the infliction patiently."

"Guh! eff Miss Thorn was in 'em, wouldn't old Squaw make pounder fly?" said Dury, as she rolled up her budget.

A light step passed cautiously in at the office entrance, and Mr. Alden appeared in the apartment where Leena and Alice were sitting, rejoicing over their temporary relief from Mrs. Thorn. His first inquiries were of Ernest.

Ernest was bright, and Allen was attending at his bedside, meeting all his wants, and cheering him with such little conversation as amused and interested him. Evelyn had just retired to seek an hour's repose, and the Colonel had gone out to look about his garden and fields. The house was hushed, and Mr. Alden and his companions were car-

rying on their conversation in subdued tones, when Ada came in from Ernest's apartment and joined them. She looked haggard and miserable. There was a restless, wandering, wild expression in her glance; a hesitating, unsettled vacillation of manner, which was more than usually apparent, and which perplexed and distressed those who observed it. Mr. Alden expressed his gratification at hearing so favorably of Ernest, to which Ada replied by a burst of tears and frantic expressions of grief.

"Oh, Mr. Alden, how shall I live, and see every day the dreadful gulf deepening and widening which forms the eternal separation between me and my child?" He every hour growing more pure and spiritual, and I every hour sinking deeper and deeper in the sin that parts us forever. Oh, it is dreadful that I *must* live. More dreadful, that, if I could, I dare not die." Ada wrung her hands, and paced the room in a storm of passionate sorrow, which Mr. Alden sought in vain to soothe.

"You are overcome with fatigue and grief, and you take too desponding a view of things. Come, sit down now, and let us look at the case in a more consoling light. Consider, my dear madam, this trial, very painful, almost insupportably so, I admit, it must be; but consider, I beseech you, this trial is only for this little present—this brief, fleeting now; while the joys for which your child is being so beautifully perfected, are of endless and unfading endurance. This parting, transient. That meeting, eternal!"

"Talk not to me of meeting my child again. What! the stained with the stainless? the sinning with the sinless? Impossible! Oh, you know not the deadly weight that is sinking me in despair; you have no conception of the utter hopelessness of my misery. Oh, I would tell you all,

everything, if I thought you could lift one atom of this fearful burden from my soul."

Alice rose, saying to Leena it was time for them to attend to some pressing domestic concerns; they left the room, Ada calling after them:

"Don't leave me. I have nothing to say which you may not hear. Oh, that I dare unburden my heart to some one who would pity and console me."

Then turning to Mr. Alden, as if prompted by an irresistible impulse:

"If I speak to you of myself, of my sorrows and my sins, will you have patience to hear and kindness to pity? Will you keep my secret a little while? Will you aid me with your counsel? Sinner as I am, will you comfort me in this fearful hour with your commiseration?"

"Most assuredly. I will aid you by every consistent effort in my power, by counsel, and care, and kindness, and sympathy, to regain your peace of mind. I cannot think that you are just to yourself in your vehement self-accusings. You are suffering yourself to be made miserable by the morbid suggestions of a too sensitive and thinking conscience. Things are not so bad."

The good clergyman sought to re-assure the suffering woman before him, by speaking more from the promptings of his wishes than his hopes, for in truth he had long had his misgivings and forebodings of evil. Ada covered her face with her hands, and a fearful struggle shook her frame; but she spoke at length, calmly, distinctly, deliberately, as if weighing every word with the firmness of a desperate resolve.

"What I am about to tell you is known to no human being. It is a secret between my own soul and my God.

Spurn me if you will when you have heard it; it matters but little now, for I am reckless. I only stipulate for forbearance while Ernest lives; I would not that his last hours should be darkened by a cloud so cold. I would not he should know me an outcast from his father's heart. Evelyn has told you the circumstances of our first acquaintance, and of our subsequent marriage?"

"He has. You will pardon me for saying I thought he was rash."

"He told you the entire truth so far as he knew. In everything he was blameless. He was only too trusting and too noble, when he took to his heart the chilled viper which he cherished but to sting him! Too pure and confiding himself to dream of deception in me! When I married Walter Evelyn I was the wife of another. I broke the solemn vows I had plighted before God at the altar. I forsook the innocent child God had given me. I placed the infernal gulf between my own soul and all that I loved, and an eternal anathema between myself and every thing happy and holy.

"It is not for me to curse any of God's creatures," said the pastor, solemnly, "neither is it for me to remove the curse pronounced against sin. You asked for pity; from my soul I do pity you. I would I could extricate you from this terrible web of your own weaving. There is but one way. You asked for counsel. It is stern counsel; I can give you no other. You must acknowledge your guilt to the man you have so cruelly deceived, and separate yourself from him at once."

With one low, stifled, wailing cry, Ada sprang to her feet and stood with uplifted hands before the calm, stern clergyman, who, though surprised and pained in heart, had so unflinchingly doomed her.

“Man, man, you are merciless! What! be my own executioner? Cut off from all hope of communion in a better world, shall I dash to the earth the only cup of blessedness in this? I can die; but I cannot live and do this.”

“Alas! alas! Mrs. Evelyn! there is no alternative! Look away from this perishing world. Do not, I do beseech you, do not, to secure a little more fatally sinful indulgence for the brief remnant of your earthly future, wilfully peril your precious eternal interests. Be assured this cannot last. You are certain sooner or later to be exposed. Even the confidence you have reposed in me renders it impossible that this secret should be kept. I should be sinning against the clearest convictions of duty, if I suffered a man I so deeply esteem and love, to continue in ignorance of the position in which he stands. Consider this, and act upon it. Save yourself some little grace in his heart, by an open, honest, voluntary confession. It is your only course. Tell him yourself.”

Ada was silent. She had hoped for some sustaining sympathy—for some partial connivance, perhaps, in preserving her secret, and eluding detection. She was terrified at the position in which she found herself, and, the first astounding shock a little over, she was softened and subdued, and the streaming tears on her pale, cold cheek, melted the indignant sternness of the pastor's mood, to soothing and compassionate forgiveness. Ada sat down by his side, and with sobbings and tears told him her temptation and her troubles; her long years of dread, and remorse, and sorrow; of her changed temper and destroyed health, of the arrival of her husband and her child, of her terrors of being detected, and of the agonized yearnings of a mother's heart for the forsaken child, now so near her. It was all

simply and unreservedly set forth, and deeply did her hearer pity, what he could not do otherwise than as deeply condemn.

"What must I do? How shall I act in this dreadful hour?"

"Do right, my poor child. There is no middle ground in this question between positive right and positive wrong. For a few days we will go on quietly as we are. I deem it best for all, that we should do so. You will have time to discipline your feelings for the trial. Let me urge you to accustom yourself to the idea of a separation, as speedily as may be from Mr. Evelyn. Believe me, when this wretched secret is off your heart, you will experience a relief, which will compensate for all the pain it costs you to cast it off. You will feel a peace you cannot have known for long, long, weary years."

"Peace! shall I ever again know peace? Oh! if you knew all the ceaseless misery I have endured, the bitter remorseful upbraidings, you would feel that I had *purchased* pardon—that I might *claim* peace."

Mr. Alden shook his head with a grave look of dissent.

"Ah, my dear madam! regret, however deep and harrowing, for the *consequences* of sin, is not that 'godly sorrowing for sin which waketh repentance.' Remorse for sin persisted in, is not penitence. 'When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive.' It is to those 'who with hearty repentance and true faith turn unto Him,' that our Heavenly Father promised forgiveness. I should be an unworthy worker in my Master's vineyard, if I suffered you to rest in any other hope."

"Oh, you mistake me entirely if you imagine I am hugging to my heart any delusion in the shape of hope, any dream of reconciliation either with God or man. No, no, I am hopeless in life and despairing in death. But surely there was much in the circumstances in which I was placed, if not to justify, at least to palliate; if not to excuse, to extenuate?"

"Ah, my dear friend, we may be sure we stand on fearful ground, when we would silence the upbraidings of an unquiet conscience, by seeking palliation for sins. Think not that I am hard and stern. I doubt not that you have suffered, and sorrowed, and often repented; but repentance without communication of sin, profiteth nothing. Of what avail is it that the drunkard bemoans ruined health, and blighted hopes, and wasted energies, and broken hearts, if he still cling to his cup, quaffing the destroyer, while he quails at the destruction? Of what avail is it, that the gambler looks back with remorseful regret upon his wasted patrimony, gnashing his teeth in the withering and torturing tauntings of memory, as he shivers, and starves, and sighs for his squandered resources; if he still haunts the card table, or the billiard room, or grasps the dice-box? Genuine repentance brings amendment, without which there is no 'remission of sins.'"

Ada listened, but she could not yet unresistingly yield. She felt that her sorrow and long years of concealed unhappiness should be taken as atonement, at least in part, for the sin that had caused them, and she renewed her plea with Mr. Alden.

"But I have been so wretched. Everything that to others brings joy, has to me been a curse; even my dearest blessings have been turned into scorpions to sting me.

The innocent caresses of my children, even when my heart yearned over them, touched to agony the rankling arrow within me. Every word of trustful affection from Walter Evelyn, every gift of his lavish bounty, every look of his anxious love, or kind expression of sympathy, when sorrowing and suffering, was but the weapon to awaken remorse. The husband I had betrayed and dishonored, the blessed cherub I had abandoned, looked out from every pleasant prospect to reproach and mock me. I heard their voices on every breeze; I felt their presence in every scene; and while I loved Evelyn and his children with a mad, idolatrous love, I felt that the homage with which my heart bowed down to them was a profanation and a mockery, an unhallowed offering at a shrine so holy as their unquestioning and guileless hearts. And then, my blessed Edith! oh, were not these mute lips an ever-present reproach to me, more eloquent in their speechless beauty than aught that tongue could ever hope to syllable? And now—now,” said Ada, rising, and wildly throwing up her arms—“now, my darling, dying Ernest,—when I think that for my sins he too turns away his steps from earth, I feel almost ready to curse God and die.”

“Hush, hush! this is mad blasphemy,” said the pastor, laying his hand on her arm with a stern look. “It is language to which it is too painful to listen. Be still, and speak such words no more.”

“What must it be, think you, to feel it? I tell you, when I look on that sweet, smiling face, so pure and peaceful, already gleaming with the light of a glorious immortality, it awakens a remorseful pang in my soul, even more searching than the blasting blaze from the terrible Gehenna.”

Ada reeled, and sunk into a seat exhausted and powerless. The kind clergyman looked upon her with deep commiseration not unmingled with alarm. He felt that the conversation had been too exciting for her frail and failing physical energies, and he almost reproached himself with having been too severe and unyielding with the poor, sinning, and remorseful sufferer; but he thought within himself: "He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are an abomination to the Lord."

"'The Lord healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds,'" repeated the pastor, solemnly and tenderly, as Ada lifted her head and shook back the soft silken tresses which had fallen over her face. "Call upon Him, dear Mrs. Evelyn; make known all your sorrows to Him, who alone can send peace and consolation. Surely you believe none ever called in vain who called in sincerity and truth. Out of the depths of this mighty affliction, cry unto Him who never deafened his ear to the pleadings of penitence."

"Oh, Mr. Alden, wicked and worthless as I am, I cannot attempt to practise any deception upon you now. My thoughts are all of earth. It is that too dear earthly judge before whose sentence I shrink with shuddering dread. It is his frown I fear, his wrath alone I deprecate—from him that I would call on the rocks and the mountains to hide me. To escape that terrible reckoning with him, I would brave everything else that human hand could inflict or human heart conceive of torture."

"And why should you 'fear them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul? Rather fear Him which is able to destroy both body and soul in hell,'" replied Mr.

Alden, beginning to despair of making any favorable impression upon the intractable spirit with which he had to deal. A doubt began to arise in his mind which had never before suggested itself, and he shaped his speech accordingly.

"I take it for granted I am speaking to one who, whatever her own personal testimony may have been, believes, humbly and devoutly, all the precepts and teachings of her own holy and blessed Communion?"

Ada groaned in anguish of heart at this question, feeling keenly all that it implied.

"Even this, even this, too, I must bear, not the least bitter among my countless array of sins—that I have brought scandal and shame on the Church in whose bosom I was nurtured, from whose altar my father went up, a faithful servant, to the reward of his stewardship—at which the husband and guide of my youth now breaks the bread of life—where I was bound in the solemn marriage vows which I have madly broken—and where my first-born and forsaken was presented for baptism by the false mother, who forswore her sponsorial vows. Oh, I am doubly and trebly curst!—in the blighted past—in the wretched present—in the hopeless future. Which way shall I turn?"

"Return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon you; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon," replied Mr. Alden, deeply moved at the distress he witnessed, and painfully perplexed as to the best method of dealing with a case so baffling.

Ada looked up for a moment with an anxious, inquiring glance into the face of the clergyman, and then asked, doubtingly and humbly:

"Can I return? Can one who has profaned with un-

hallowed touch the blessed symbols of redeeming love, dare to look up, and pray to be forgiven?"

"For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer," responded the pastor.

Ada extended her hand to him, while a faint smile gleamed through her tears, as she said, "I thank you; I cannot tell you how deeply you have driven me to my only refuge. 'I will arise and go to my father.' I will struggle and strive for pardon, in penitence and contrition of heart. Come often to see me. I shall cling to you, to save me from myself."

After closing his long and agitating interview with Ada, Mr. Alden stepped into the room where Allen was sitting by the couch of Ernest. Ada retired to her own room to weep, and commune with her struggling heart, to bend with blinding tears over the pages of her Bible, and with groanings and anguish of spirit to pray and seek counsel of her Maker.

Ernest put forth his hand in cheerful and affectionate greetings of Mr. Alden, whose unvarying gentleness and kindness had won his love.

"How do you find yourself this pleasant morning, my dear little friend?" asked the pastor, taking the proffered hand between his own, and greeting Allen with a smile, and cheerful "good morning, Allen."

"Oh, very bright and cheerful, Mr. Alden. I have nothing to do but lie here and be very happy, looking into the faces I love: always kind faces and loving looks around me. If they would not sometimes look so sad, I should

feel nothing but joy. It is a very pleasant morning out, I suppose? It is light and pleasant everywhere. I hear the birds singing on the trees, the little rustling of the bright green leaves, and the solemn roaring of the sea; they are all pleasant sounds to me, and I wish there was no such thing as sorrow on the earth. When I think that all these will be when I am gone, I wish that they could sound as sweet and soothing to those I love as they now sound to me. Here's Allen, too, sitting so still and quiet all these long hours by my bed, when I hear the boys whooping and shouting at their play; he shakes his head with the tears in his eyes, when I say it is wearisome for him, and says he would rather be here. And papa sits here, so watchful and patient, never sleeping, never tired; and mother, with her sad, pale face! Oh, if they only would not mind it." And the lids fell softly on the marble cheek, and the boy sunk into slumber.

Mr. Alden looked with an aching heart on the beautiful boy in his quiet sleep, and thought of the trial he would be spared, and of the crushing blow which hung over his father, of the sinful, suffering mother, and he wondered, "why are these things so?" and his thoughts replied to their own questioning: "Thy way is on the sea, and thy paths in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known." And he stooped down with tears in his eyes, and kissed the brow of the sweet, sleeping boy, and turned his steps towards his own cheerful, happy home, with sorrow in his heart.

And so day passed after day—they watched, and waited, and wept. Ernest slumbered, and lifted his little hands in prayer, and smiled and slumbered again; and woke, and smiled, and spoke sweet, loving words; and

kissed away the tears that streamed as they bent over him. It was a beautiful bright evening, the moon looked in at the open window on his pillow, the wave which he loved to listen to dashed mournfully on the beach, and the dew glistened on the quivering leaves. Ernest looked forth, and listened, and said it was all so pleasant and beautiful; he lifted his dear little trembling hands, and they all said, "Our Father" with him. His voice was full, and clear, and sweet; then he gave them his good-night kiss, and said he should "bid them good-night early, for he was so sleepy." He turned his head on his pillow with a sweet smile, the snowy lids, with their long silken lashes, drooped, and drooped, and fell. Ernest slumbered, and never lifted them again.

There was silence, sadness, and deep gloom over all the house, for the little blessed spirit had departed, and the sweet, smiling, deserted clay that had been its dwelling, the "outward and visible sign" of the loved and loving Ernest, lay in its spotless garments, and lifted the soft, shadowy eyes to meet their gaze no more.

Evelyn still kept his silent, patient watch beside him, in calm uncomplaining submission; grieving, and lonely, and lost without his heart-filling occupation; a Christian, humble and trusting in his unfaltering faith; a father, tenderly sorrowing in the depths of his wounded heart.

Ada was coldly calm. Silent in her suffering, but with writhings of heart veiled from all human scrutiny; with strange, wild, conflicting emotions too turbulent for tenderness or tears; kneeling by her departed child with a thrill of savage joy that he was gone without knowledge of her sin; then with a gush of anguish that she had not told him all her crushing sorrow, and implored his pity and

his prayer ; one moment exulting at her own escape, another shocked and horrified, and loathing herself for the cruel thought ; avoiding Evelyn with a cold, determined indifference, which distressed and wounded him, and preserving a stern, steady self-command which astonished him.

With Mr. Alden she sought frequent interviews, always renewing voluntarily her promise to communicate to Evelyn unreservedly the story of her falsehood and deception.

“ It was vanity, Mr. Alden, in the first instance, which tempted me to disguise myself, and conceal from Evelyn the fact that I was the wife of another. During all the time that we had been fellow-voyagers, I had scarcely noticed him. I had never bestowed a thought upon him ; my heart was occupied with grief for the dead, and impatient anticipations of meeting the living. Never, till that fatal storm, had one thought of interest in anything but home and its beloved inmates visited my heart. But when, in that awful hour, he cast away his only chance of escape, and nobly periled his own life to save or perish with me, the temptations of Satan assailed me. I felt that to know me a wife and a mother, would loosen my hold on his imagination, and my power would be gone. I was silent only. By no word or sign did I seek to deceive him, till the coil of the serpent was round my heart, and I could not retrace that first, fatal, false step. Gratitude and dependence completed what vanity had begun, and admiration of his noble qualities, veneration for his inflexible purity, and love for his unobtrusive virtues, and gentle, affectionate nature, have strengthened the chains that bound me. You will admit that I was sorely tempted ?”

“ I cannot understand how one who, from her child-

hood up, had so constantly on her lips the petition, 'Lead us not into temptation,' could so deliberately walk into it, entirely of her own volition, without any apparent leading at all," replied Mr. Alden, not willing to leave her any 'refuge of lies,' nor any shelter of fallacy under which to hide. "I am sorry to seem severe or unkind, when the hand of the Lord is laid so heavily upon you."

"I cannot have a thought so unjust. I know that you seek to lead me aright, and that you mean it all in kindness, though your prescriptions are bitter."

"Remember, I beg, that if I probe the wound with harsh and unskilful hand, it is that healing may follow. While I would remind you that 'our secret sins shall be set in the light of his countenance,' I would also have you believe, and be comforted in the belief, that 'He is a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat,' and that 'the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces.'"

"My secret sins, Mr. Alden, are many, very many. The one great sin, which, being against human as well as divine laws, is open to the judgment and condemnation of all, is yet a small item in the great sum-total of heart-sins to which it has led. The constant, daily, hourly commission of acted and uttered falsehood; the deep deception, the hypocrisy, the profanations of sacred things, the neglect of duties, social, domestic, and religious—Oh! there is an endless, hopeless array which I shudder to contemplate."

Ada bent down her head in shame and sorrow, and Mr. Alden replied with what consoling suggestions he might:

"Ah, Mrs. Evelyn! we all have need to veil our faces, and cry 'unclean,' when we look with the eye of impar-

tial judgment into our own hearts. The thousand little unthought-of sins, which start up in every heart, when subjected to searching self-examination, furnish appalling matter for contrition and discipline. Indeed, it is not always those whose acts are most glaringly open to censure, who carry in their bosoms hearts the most unclean in the sight of God. I doubt not there are many, who, walking fairly in all outward seemings, shunning all open violations of the decalogue, and sinning in act against no legal or social enactments, yet carry into all the relations of life 'Pride, vain glory, and hypocrisy; envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness;' who are unjust when they judge, and unrighteous when they condemn. I cannot doubt that there is many a convicted and imprisoned culprit who lifts up cleaner hands, and a purer heart, to his Maker, than some who, walking abroad in the light of a good report, perhaps sat in judgment upon, and condemned him."

"All this may be—I do not question it; but it affords me no shelter. By our own doings we must all be judged. According to the account which we ourselves shall render, must our own doom be sealed. Oh, I do so dread the blasting trial I have to encounter! That once over, I think I can turn my thoughts within, and prepare myself for that last dread reckoning, scarcely more appalling. You will stand by me yet a little while, for I am friendless and forlorn, a stranger, wearying in a far, strange land?"

"Assuredly. You shall have every aid and support which I can render you. Let me urge you to compose yourself, and not let the anticipation disturb you too much. There is no joy so perfect, and no trouble so dismaying, as it seems when looked at from a distance."

Mr. Alden took his leave, and walked to the Post-office,

whence he soon returned, bringing to Evelyn a letter from De Koven. It was a hasty note, containing no messages to, or inquiries after, any one. He merely said,—

“I have important communications for your private ear, and shall be in Sea-spray on the earliest possible day. Make no comments to Mrs. Evelyn.”

Evelyn silently folded the note, and cast it aside.

It probably related to some of De Koven's personal arrangements, in which, dearly as he loved him, he felt no interest now. The strongest feeling it awakened, was a pang as he thought of the pleasure his arrival would have afforded Ernest; and he turned again to pace the room which contained the shrouded form, by the side of which Allen was sobbing, in the unrestrained overflowings of boyhood's sorrow. The evening was drawing on again, and Evelyn paused in his walk, and stood by the side of the sweet remains.

“Ah, my blessed boy, the night is bright and beautiful, but you see it not; the birds are still singing blithely on the branches, and all the sounds which were such sweet music to your ear, come like a dirge on mine. The business of this dull world will go on just the same, and few will miss you in its bustle. Men will plough, and sow, and reap, and garner. I shall have to be in and of the lonely world, eat and drink, live and move, amid scenes where you are not, in which my heart can no more have part; for life without you, my child, is desolate and dark.”

Evelyn turned away and resumed his walk; people passed in and out, arranging the room, and preparing for the night, but he did not heed.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE weary days, and the wearier nights, intervening between death and burial, every lingering minute of which seems winged with a fresh barbed sorrow to the mourning heart, had passed. The last lacerating parting was over, and the sweet-toned bell was again sending forth its call, in a slow, solemn peal, every toll waking an answering throb in Evelyn's listening heart. Mr. Alden had sent his carriage to Gosport, in kind consideration of Evelyn's unspoken wish, to bring the rector, and had gone, on a summons from Ada, to converse with her in her own room, from which she now entered with him, bonneted and veiled to follow her boy to his grave. Evelyn rose as she entered, and advanced to meet her with anxious solicitude.

"Ada, my dear wife, you don't think of going out?"

"Let me go with you, Walter, let me go once more, in the light of the blessed day."

"But you are not equal to the exertion—let me order a carriage."

"No, let me walk, Walter, let me walk; our blessed Saviour went wearily bearing his cross! Let me walk, bearing my heavy load of shame, and misery, and sin. Oh, let me follow our child to his grave, going forth by your side, once more in the light of your love; and then I will come

home and cast from my soul this galling oppression of sin, which has so long been fretting away my life. Once more, Walter, let me stand by your side and look on the graves of our children ; and then I will come home and tell you all my grief and my guilt, and look on your face no more."

Evelyn turned an anxious inquiring glance upon Mr. Alden, who could scarcely command himself to meet that look of anguish, as he hurriedly asked :

"What shall I do ? I am utterly unmanned ! Does her reason waver, or what is the meaning of this strange and terrible language ?"

"You had better indulge her," replied the pastor, answering the first question, and evading all notice of the others. "Her heart is set upon going to the grave. She is frail, perhaps hardly equal to it, but she will not bear opposition."

Evelyn looked searchingly in his face as he spoke, but turned away with a troubled, disturbed expression, and asked no questions.

"Let him think she is insane till this is over: anything but the truth just now, poor fellow!" thought the clergyman.

The hour appointed for the funeral had fully arrived. The bell was still tolling, and the people were assembling and filling the rooms. But the rector from Gosport did not arrive. Time passed, and the delay was beginning to be painfully embarrassing. At length a carriage was heard rapidly approaching the house, and Col. Hesselten called Mr. Alden to the door. The rector was unfortunately absent from Gosport, and the messenger had brought a clergyman who had just arrived from Boston, and who, accidentally hearing of the disappointment, had kindly volunteered to come, leaving the party of friends with

whom he was traveling to follow in the evening's stage. Under the circumstances, the Colonel and Mr. Alden concluded it not advisable to apprise Evelyn of the change, briefly explaining to the stranger Ada's precarious health and peculiarly nervous and sensitive temperament.

The clergyman thus unceremoniously thrown among a strange people, was a man of prepossessing personal appearance and air, with a high, broad brow, on which were legibly written characters of sorrow and care. It was a mild, calm countenance, inspiring confidence, and expressive of a kindly affectionate nature, but decided, firm, and authoritative in its glance. He stepped softly into the room, and laying his hand on the coffin, read the plate, "Ernest Atherton Evelyn," with a perceptible start, and an eager inquiring glance around the assemblage. But no familiar face met his gaze. No look of recognition spoke with answering glance to his eyes; they were all strangers. The young men who had been chosen as bearers, stepped in and lifted the coffin. Evelyn rose, with Ada, closely veiled, leaning on his arm; they were ready to move; and the deep-toned, solemn voice of the stranger rose in the thrilling words —

"I am the resurrection and the life."

It was enough; with a long, piercing cry which rung through the house, Ada threw up her veil and sprang forward. "Ernest, oh Ernest," broke from her pale lips, and she knew no more.

The pallor of death spread over the face of the stranger, and a mighty tremor shook his frame; but it passed quickly; he had mastered his feelings, and stood deadly pale, but silent and calm, awaiting the result.

"We had better move on," said Mr. Alden, addressing himself to Evelyn.

"It will be a cruel disappointment to take her child away while she is in this state. I cannot do it," responded Evelyn, lingering and looking tenderly back upon Ada, stretched in a state of insensibility, and surrounded by a group of ladies, removing garments and applying restoratives.

"It is better far as it is ; she will be in no state to go out when she recovers. It is very important to get these people out of the house before she is restored to consciousness."

Evelyn hesitated. How could he deprive her of the melancholy gratification of following her child to the grave ? it would be so inconsiderate and cruel. He turned back and bent over her, and hesitated.

"Allow me to act for you here. I have reasons which I will render afterwards. Move on," said the pastor, decidedly, turning to the young bearers. Evelyn said no more, but taking Allen by the hand, followed the coffin, erect and stately in his sorrow.

The voice of the officiating clergyman was deep and powerful, but at times tremulous and broken ; and a strange agitation seemed to have fallen upon the friends more immediately surrounding Evelyn.

The last sad tribute was rendered, and Ernest too slept in his little grave : with the dash of the restless billow, to which he had so loved to listen, forever echoing over it, the sweet summer dews keeping fresh and bright its verdure, and the solemn stars holding silent watch above it.

The silent multitude drew back and in scattering groups departed, while Evelyn remained standing with folded arms beside the graves of his children, absorbed in his own thoughts, and unheeding the people or scenes around him, forgetting everything but the little sleepers in the graves on which he gazed. Mr. Alden and Col. Hesselten stood

at a distance, conversing earnestly, and lingering with a feeling that their presence might be important. The stranger clergyman advanced, and laying his arm on Evelyn's, aroused him from his deep abstraction, saying as he did so :

"Excuse me, I pray you : but I find something so bewildering here. That name," pointing to the tablet at Edith's grave, "and the name on the coffin plate, belong to me and mine. How is it that I find them here, in a strange place and among an unknown people?"

"It is nothing strange," replied Evelyn, quietly, "that my children should bear these names, though it was a strange direction of Providence which led me to lay them here. My son, whom you have just buried, bore the name of his mother's father ; his sister, some few years older, and a few months since laid in the grave at which you stand, bore the name of her mother's only sister."

"And what name, allow me to ask," said the stranger, his whole frame quivering with eager emotion — "what name did their mother bear?"

Evelyn replied with the calmness of perfect truth, unconscious of evil, "Mrs. Evelyn's name was Ada Atherton."

"God of my fathers !" exclaimed the stranger, staggering back ; "that voice, then, was no mockery of my imagination ? Oh, has the sea rendered up its dead to haunt me ? Oh, man of sin ! when ? where ? how ? did you beguile from herself, her husband and her God, the wife of my bosom and the mother of my child ?"

"This is strange language you address to me, the childless father, by the new-made grave of his only son. I know not of what crime you accuse me. You must be the dupe of some insane delusion. What would you with me ?"

"What would I with you? Smooth, smiling seducer. I am Ernest Atherton!"

Evelyn extended his hand with a faint, sad smile.

"That name sanctifies its bearer. I greet you as Ada's cousin; though my greeting must, of necessity, be a sad one."

Atherton recoiled with a look of loathing and horror.

"What—here! by this new-made grave, have you the heartless audacity to extend your hand to me?—to me, the insulted, despoiled husband of the guilty lost thing you have betrayed to degradation and ruin?"

Mr. Alden advanced, and taking Evelyn by the arm, sought to draw him away; but he resisted, and turning again to Atherton, spoke slowly and with difficulty, like one bewildered by a stunning blow:

"Did I hear aright, or has sorrow maddened me? Speak again. Say it was not so—you did not mean it. Say it is false, foul calumny, invented to torture me. Insulting mocker! Deny it—deny it."

"Come—come, Evelyn, my friend, compose yourself, and let us go home," said Alden, with earnest endeavors to draw him away.

"Not yet—not yet. I could not face my innocent Ada with this imputation on her purity, uttered here over the graves of her children, unretracted. Wait, wait, and hear him recall it—for he shall recall it," said Evelyn, wildly.

"Alas! my poor deceived, suffering friend, he cannot recall what you must learn to bear. Unhappily the gentleman's words are true. I have been some days in Mrs. Evelyn's confidence."

Evelyn reeled away; then leaned heavily upon Mr Alden's shoulder, whispering hoarsely:

"Go on—I see it all now. Everything strange is made plain—fool—dupe that I have been. Say on."

"I have little more to say. She told me the same story precisely as your own, with regard to your meeting and first acquaintance; admitting that she had been several years the wife of her cousin; that she concealed the fact from you, and that you married her without a suspicion of wrong. She has pledged herself to make to you a full confession of all her temptations and trials, as soon as this solemn day was over. You don't doubt that she has suffered—you have witnessed and wondered at it. Her health has failed under it, and her end is near. I do entreat you both, gentlemen, be merciful, as you would yourselves find mercy in your utter need."

Atherton had stood in silent attention, perfectly calm, and moving not a muscle. The storm which had shaken him so powerfully was quelled, and he stood erect, stern and passionless, looking with a keen, searching gaze coldly on the withering features of Evelyn, who, stung and tortured in every nerve, was boiling and quivering with wrath.

"Come," said he, addressing Atherton—"come, you shall see me confront this woman, who has so long trifled with honor and truth. You shall hear her acquit me of all wilful participation in this disgraceful and damnable deed."

"No; I have no wish to hear more of this marvellous tale, in which a noble, high-minded seducer seeks to redeem his own honor by casting all the obloquy on his miserable, misguided victim. No doubt it is a brave scheme, but I do not care to play any part in it."

Atherton turned away with a contemptuous laugh, but Mr. Alden arrested his steps.

"Allow me to ask your attention one moment. This is an extremely delicate business for a stranger to meddle with, but permit me to say, I have some knowledge of the circumstances on which to found my belief. Let me assure you, I know positively that, till he gained it from yourself, Evelyn has never had the slightest suspicion of aught wrong in his union with the woman he believed to be his wife. Sir, I am a minister, serving at the altar of the church of God. I hold my ordination vows as sacred as you, I doubt not, hold your own. Will you not take my assurance, when I say I *know* that Walter Evelyn is a pure, high-minded gentleman, a sincere, devout, consistent, ardent Christian. I *know* this; need I say more?"

"No more, to convince me that you believe what you say. You may be imposed upon and deceived."

"Trust me, I am not; at least come home with him, or with me; this is no place for discussions like this."

"You are right: I will go where you please; with him, if you counsel it; I do not wish to be unjust."

Mr. Alden took Evelyn kindly by the arm, and they walked home together in silence. They found Ada in the room where they had left her, awaiting them, tearless, mute and motionless. Evelyn advanced, calm from the very concentration of rage, and stood before her, pointing to Atherton as he asked:

"Ada, do you know that man? Do you know who it is that God has sent in awful retribution to bury my child?"

"Say *our* child, Walter, say *our* child; take not from me the only sweet thought that is left to me, the blessed memory of our child. He was my child, Walter."

"Therefore do I thank God that the sheltering shadow of the grave lies between him and the withering breath of this lasting disgrace."

"Have mercy, Walter, though I deserve it not."

"Oh, my sweet innocent children! It is terrible to be constrained to thank God that the cold damp earth was heaped on their beautiful brows, ere they were stained and seared with the damning brand of illegitimate birth. Oh, woman, woman, weak and wicked in your deluding loveliness, how little did I dream when I held you in my despairing grasp on the lonely sea, and vowed in my own soul, God permitting us, to care for, cherish, shield and love you, that I was vowing destruction to both our souls, and pledging myself to a life of damning, adulterous sin."

"Curse me not, Walter. Set not you heel too heavily on the crushed worm, that only prays, in its writhing wretchedness, to crawl to your feet and die."

"Answer me now, Ada, do you know this man?"

Ada cowered down, covering her face and trembling, as Evelyn drew Atherton forward. Atherton spoke, and his words were low, musical, and sad. "Ada, my poor misguided Ada, you need not fear me. I find you, Oh, how changed from the fair sunny thing for whom these fifteen long years I have mourned in widowed loneliness; for whom, Oh, how many long hopeless months my prayers went up unceasingly; for whose sake, in my frantic agony, I cursed the winds and the waves; and now, my unholy repinings have come back with fearful recoil. I have found you, and how? a blighted wreck; a childless mother; a disowned wife. Still, Ada, Oh Ada, companion of my happy boyhood, friend and wife of my early manhood, child of my more than father, mother of my fair young child, I have no resentments for you; I am still your cousin, as in your childish years. Speak, Ada: look up and say you will not fear me."

"Oh, Ernest, ever kind and noble, I can only thank you that you do not curse me. Grant me one more boon. Speak no harsh words, harbor no unkind thoughts of him whom I have dragged down with me in this great ruin. He has no share in anything but the sorrow."

A shadow for an instant flitted over the face of Atherton. Her first word was a plea for him for whose sake he had been forsaken! but he put away the evil thought. His whole life had been a struggle to crucify self, and he had laid all selfish and earthly emotions with a devoted zeal on the altar of duty. He was a subdued, devoted Christian, a faithful, active laborer in his holy calling; and while he preached, labored and prayed to overcome sin in others, he had watched, wept, prayed and wrestled to subdue himself. Evelyn was walking about in almost a fury of passion; mortified, deceived, destroyed, disgraced, everything else was lost in the sting of wounded pride, and soiled, insulted honor. He passed out and paced furiously up and down in another room. After a long conversation with Ada, aided by Mr. Alden, Atherton sought Evelyn, and entered with perfect composure into conversation with him, speaking mildly as he said, "I am satisfied that I have done you injustice. I wish to retract and apologize for my taunting remarks. I was ungentlemanly; under the peculiar circumstances, ungenerous; I acknowledge and regret it. I was taken by surprise, and my first impression was not a strange one. I am satisfied that I was wrong; I am sorry for it. I cannot say more."

"Your supposition was the only probable or natural one; it was to be expected. You owe me no apologies or explanations," said Evelyn, haughtily. "I expect to stand before the world as a precious scoundrel; a bold, unprincipled, seducing, adulterous villain. I have my choice of delecta-

ble positions — which would you advise? I can pass for a blind, besotted fool, the doting, unwilling dupe of a weak, wilful woman, squandering the wealth of the heart's holiest affections, and wasting the pride and the prime of manhood at the feet of another man's wife."

"I acknowledge it, you are placed in a painful position, even more galling than mine!—unconsciously and involuntarily made to appear as an accessory in a disgraceful transaction. The consciousness of innocence must sustain you."

"Consciousness of innocence!—a pretty phrase for a sentimental girl. It is hardly balm for the chafing spirit and wounded honor of a proud, irritated, incensed man. I have been for her sake a homeless, aimless, wandering Cain upon the face of the earth, a useless, disfranchised citizen, without name, or station, or position, or influence. It is not so with you. You have home and friends, a high and holy calling, an honored position, an extended and beneficial influence, untarnished reputation and unquestioned honor. With me all the promise and purpose of life are defeated. I am friendless, homeless, childless, a desolate, disgraced, heart-broken man."

"You have drawn a sad picture. I will not attempt to match it," said Atherton, in low, mournful tones, "or I might tell of a desolated home and a widowed heart; for surely I need not tell you, the wife so long lamented as dead, whose memory was so faithfully cherished and mourned, was tenderly beloved?"

"Yes, you loved her! doubtless you loved her!" said Evelyn, bitterly, "with the cool, cautious, prudent love, born of a prosperous wooing."

"I gave to her, unreservedly, all the wealth of as pure

and unselfish a love as ever was garnered in a true and trusting heart," replied Atherton, calmly.

"Granted," said Evelyn, "it had time to be planted and take root, sunned in the fostering beams of familiar acquaintanceship, to bud and blossom, mature and ripen, mid the quiet scenes, and smiling, happy homes of green England. But was it less selfish, think you, than mine, when I took her, a helpless, friendless, nameless stranger, thrown like a forsaken and worthless weed on the stormy and pitiless sea, in unquestioning love to my bosom?"

"We are both," said Atherton, putting down his rising wrath with the strong effort of a determined but disciplined will—"we are both blighted and betrayed men, disappointed and grieved in our dearest earthly affections. Why should we quarrel?"

"Disappointed and grieved!" retorted Evelyn, his proud lip curling with indignant scorn; "and what is disappointment or grief, to the sting of the damning disgrace and shame into which the soft temptress beguiled me."

"Let us cease this unprofitable discussion," said Atherton, mildly. "It is a wretchedly harrowing position in which we find ourselves; but let us think of others. How can I break this astounding intelligence to my daughter? How can she act? Or how can I guide her? Can we in aught act in concert for the comfort and peace of her who is now a mutual care?"

"You surely cannot expect me to take back to my heart with confiding, caressing affection, the unprincipled thing, who, for so many years, has nestled herself a living lie in my bosom?"

"I have scarcely looked beyond the present and its pressing exigencies. I have taken no counsel with myself,

or thought of expediency or proprieties. Something is due to those among whom we are placed—you know them. Seek cool dispassionate advice and counsel for yourself and her.”

“Seek cool counsel! Who by counsel can undo the accursed past? Who make less debasing the scathing infamy of the humiliating present? Who redeem from contempt and jeering scorn the dark, dreary future? Who shall counsel a degraded man with a raging hell in his heart? Away with your smooth spoken words, and unmeaning mockeries of consolation and counsel, and preach peace to the whirlwind.”

Evelyn went out and away, afar off into the wide fields, in the coolness and stillness of the gathering twilight, reckless and wretched, lost to himself and all the hallowing influences which had hitherto governed and guided him. But he could not walk off the madness within him. He could not flee from the mocking devils that goaded him, wounded worldly pride, dread of men’s scorn, the hissing serpent shame, the deriding laugh, the pointing finger, the withering sarcasm of that most heartless of all Satan’s pitiless brood, the imp ridicule. How could he brave or brook them? What *he*, the high-hearted and noble, the pure in purpose and in practice, the proud in principle? *He*, to whom all chivalrous niceties were idols? To whom gentlemanly honor was a shrined divinity? *He*, to be a mark for derision? *He*, to be trampled and trod upon? *His* name in men’s mouths a bye-word and a mockery? He turned again in his stormy wrath, striding furiously on, bounding over, and spurning obstacles, wending he recked not whither, till the gleaming tablets of the grave-yard, with the peaceful moonlight falling in silvery floods upon

and around them, arrested his eye. He paused—a voice was speaking in his heart, at which all mocking sounds were silenced. A soft sweet image had risen on his thoughts, before which the foul fiends that had maddened him veiled their faces and fled.

With the hallowing remembrance of Edith and Ernest, came softening and melting emotions; he threw his arms over the graves, as if he would reach and regain the inmates.

“Not here, oh! not here, can I bring such unholy emotions! Not over your graves, my loved little ones, can I bend in this warfare of wicked and worldly resentings! Not here, my blessed Ernest, by this fresh-turned sod, can I come with wrath and wailing in my heart, against the mother you so much loved!”

Evelyn sat down, subdued and sobered from the first mad outbreak of passion, beside the graves of his children, and held long, sad communings with himself. How could he look, with the heart's yearning gaze, through earth and sod, upon that sweet, upturned face, and not listen to its pale pleadings for the sad, crushed mother, standing ever in that young gentle heart, an image of purity and blessedness, glowing in the reflected light of his undoubting, childlike love? His heart turned towards Ada with relenting softness—Ada, deserted in this first terrible hour of her childless loneliness—alone and desolate in her bereavement. He would return to her. He would take her to his heart, and weep over and comfort her. He would recall his murderous, bitter words. He would forgive the wrong and forget the shame. It was for him, who mourned so deeply, to sustain the mourning mother of his children. For their sakes, he would remember only her great sorrow

and their great love. He rose in the impulse of his new born purpose. But stay—was this right? Was he sure of himself? or had he mistaken his own motives? Was he urged by the promptings of that pure and holy charity which beareth, relieveth, hopeth, and endureth all things? or was he in sinful self-indulgence listening to the pleadings of a guilty, forbidden love? He sunk back appalled. What was Ada to him?—Ada, the long since wedded wife of another?—Ada, the recognized, the exposed, the claimed? What was she to him, or he to her, any more, now, henceforth and forever? Oh, madness and misery, from which there was no outlet but death! He could not hate her, and he must not love. He turned again in his despair to embrace the grave. “Oh, my children, would death but gather me to this safe haven beside you! Would God but call me to my rest away from the evil to come!”

A shadow darkened the moonlight on the grave, and a hand was laid on Evelyn’s uncovered head. He looked up, Clarence De Koven stood before him. He rose, and Clarence passed his arm lovingly around him, with words of soothing:

“Oh, Evelyn, dear Evelyn, I would have periled life to have spared you this.”

The deep fountains of sorrow were unsealed at this unexpected and affectionate greeting; Evelyn dropped his head on the shoulder of his long-loved friend, and wept in uncontrollable and utter self-abandonment. What to him now was dignity of deportment, or self-sustaining pride of manhood, that he should not weep and make moan at the graves of his household, on the breast of him who had known and loved them? His first thought was of Ernest, and his first words uttered it:

"Oh, Clarence, he did so love you, and long to see you once more."

"I should have been with you long ago, but that anxiety to keep the clew I was unwinding, and to avert, as long as possible, the blow I saw impending, has chained my steps to others. But come home, come home, Evelyn; you are wet with this chill night dew. Come with me at once, and get off these damp garments."

"Home, home! Oh, Clarence, what and where is my home?"

"We will make for ourselves a home, dear Evelyn; the world is spread wide before us. Come with me now—come."

"My world is here, Clarence, narrowed to two little graves! I can seek no home but this." Evelyn sat down, and folding his arms, leaned heavily back against the slab at Edith's grave. Another figure came out from the shadow of a willow tree which loving hands had planted, and advanced. It was Atherton. Evelyn rose with a repelling gesture, planting himself before the graves:

"Not here!—not here should we two meet. Stand back."

"And why not here?" asked Atherton, calmly. "Why not here, if with a peaceful purpose? I knew you would seek counsel of the grave, and hither to its hallowed presence I have followed you. Here, beside your buried dead, I lay open my heart before God, while I say to you, because you cannot read it, it harbors not one resentful or unkind feeling towards you. Why, because we are placed in strange, unprecedented positions in relation to each other, why can we not be at peace? Let the

world laugh, let it censure if it will, what is the world to us? My business is with the world which lies beyond this, to school and discipline, ere I dare to teach others, my own wayward heart. I have long since learned to disregard the censures or the applause of this world in matters which concern it not. Our business now is to forget ourselves. We are men, and we can bear the rough passages of life. But for this frail, suffering, dying penitent who stands alone and friendless between us, we have need to judge and act with delicate care and kindness. Come, I extend to you my hand. Let us go home like brothers and like Christians."

Evelyn took the hand so frankly proffered, and each taking an arm of De Koven, they walked back whence they came.

They found Col. Hesselten and Mr. Alden sitting in the dining-room. Evelyn came forward, in strong emotion, to speak to them, turning first to the Colonel:

"I fear, dear kind friend, I am taking unwarrantable liberties with your house, making it the scene of so much that is unpleasant and needing apology; believe me, it was unforeseen and unintentional."

"You need give yourself no trouble on my account. I understand it all. Make yourself at home, and as happy as you can. You are heartily welcome to a share of my home, as long as you desire or need it."

"May I ask, what in this strange and painful emergency would you counsel me to do?"

"Do nothing; but let things take their course, and take them quietly. You two are not the sufferers. You cannot do otherwise than deal kindly with that sick, suffering woman. Her days will not be long. She has been very

evidently declining during the whole time that she has been here. Nothing but the feverish stimulus of constant mental excitement has sustained her so long. She is very prostrate now, and she must be subjected to no more agitation or trials. I am master here, remember," he continued, pleasantly. "She is under my protection. I claim the authority to forbid any interference with my guest."

"Come, Evelyn," said De Koven, "get you to the fire; you are very damp. I will see you again presently."

Atherton and De Koven departed; the one to join his daughter at the Hotel, the other to seek his old quarters with his friend Hardy.

Evelyn took his seat by the kitchen fire, and sought to forget his new and stunning trouble in low, mournful, tearful talk with Allen, of Ernest, and their by-gone days of happiness in his company.

The couch on which Ernest had breathed out his little life was restored to the parlor, where he had occupied it, and Ada lay upon it in a state of dreamy prostration. Dr. Hesselten, with his wife and Mrs. Alden, were silently watching beside her.

Dury toddled about getting tea, grieving for Ernest with an honest, silent sorrow, and wondering what was the meaning of all the "strange doings," counting up in her thoughts, how often she had heard the voice of the mourning dove, and remembering with a shudder how the cows in Melton's barn-yard had mourned and lowed all the night before, a sure premonition of impending death.

"No cup for poor lady to-night. Well, I knowed cow didn't make that ere cry all night for nothin'. Lady shell go next, and Dury'll have to stay 'long o' Sophy 'gin. Dreffe sight o' dead corpses to come under ruff."

Poor Dury set the tea-table and soliloquized, with a sad, troubled presentiment in her simple heart, for she loved the gentle stranger, who had never extended to her aught but kind words and liberal largess, with smiling thanks for all her acts of service. Meantime Leena and Alice, with the assistance of their kind neighbors, Milly Henshaw and her sisters, who had been life-long friends, always ready with a helping hand, in joy or in sorrow, with a merry laugh or a gush of tears, as the case might be, had been busy all over the house, settling things after the funeral, re-arranging and preparing their house and their hearts for another chapter in the sad history of sickness, and sorrow, and death. Everything had a muffled and peculiar sound, for that solemn hush was over everything, the indescribable melancholy stillness of that first terrible night, when the fresh memory of the newly departed pervades and hallows the places left desolate, as with a visible and palpable presence. When the heart hears, as with a quickened sense, the sounds it has so long listened to, the gentle voice, the moaning plaint, the murmuring prayer, the panting sigh, the failing breath, all coming up in the stillness of that oppressive silence, which almost speaks, which does speak, in audible throbs in the swelling, suffocating heart, that listens in its loneliness.

CHAPTER XXIX.

ATHERTON sought his daughter in a state of bewildering perplexity. What should he say to the child so unconscious of evil ; whose heart had, from her infant years, been filled with sweet images of the mother so loved and so lamented by all who had surrounded her ? How could he call the blush of shame to that fair young brow ? How tell the tale of a mother's disgrace, and desertion of home and all its holy ties, to the ears of the pure-minded daughter ?

"It is useless to study sentences, or frame modes and forms of expression which I shall not utter," thought he, as he ascended to the private parlor in which she was sitting. "I will tell her the simple truth, and leave the manner and the issue with God."

"Oh, papa," said Ellen, joyfully, as he entered, "I am so glad you have come. What has kept you so long ?"

"I encountered a scene of great trial and sorrow, Ellen, my child, and it has quite overcome me," said Atherton, sinking into a seat, even more agitated than he had feared.

"I see it has, papa. How pale and distressed you look ; and you are trembling all over. Papa, you are sick ?"

"No, Ellen dear, don't be alarmed ; but my feelings have

been severely wrought upon. Let me collect myself, and I will tell you."

Atherton laid his face in his hands on the arm of the sofa, and sent up a brief petition for strength and guidance, ere he spoke :

"Ellen, you remember Captain De Koven's telling us an interesting story of his shipwreck and subsequent sojourn in this place, and the interest it excited, so strongly as to induce us to visit a people he had described in such glowing terms?"

"I do, of course ;" a soft flush mantling her fair face as Ellen replied : "The ladies at the house here have been telling me a sad story of the wrecked family ; of the mute girl ; the beautiful boy, just dead, whom everybody loved ; and the pale, melancholy, declining lady, so fair and frail, their mother."

"Did it excite your sympathy, Ellen, my darling child?" asked Atherton, in tremulous, choking accents.

"It did, indeed, dear father. You know I always think of my mother when I hear of disasters on the sea. Did you see the lady, papa ? and was it her affliction that has so disturbed and overcome you ?"

"It was. It has shaken me even more than I was aware at the time. . . . I want air."

Ellen drew aside the drapery of the window hastily, and Atherton sat down by it, faint and breathless.

"Dear father, you are seriously ill ; let me call for help."

"Be easy, my child. No, there is no help for this, but patience and self-control. Sit down, and listen with all the composure you can, for I shall say much to agitate you. Do you remember, Ellen, the first time we met De Koven,

the strange manner in which he gazed at you ? so much so that I resented it as impertinent, until he, with the frankness which belongs to his nature, explained and apologized, by telling of the perfect resemblance you bore to Mrs. Evelyn ?”

“ I remember it all ?”

“ Do you also remember his abrupt breaking off, once, in the midst of a story he was telling, of picking up a boat adrift on the ocean ? and of his many questions, so often repeated, concerning your mother’s loss ? How anxiously he noted the season, the date, and how singularly curious we thought he was, in collecting every particular ?”

“ I remember it all ; but why should this disturb you so much more now than then ?”

“ Ellen, dear, innocent, forsaken child, that boat contained two individuals from the ill-fated vessel in which your lost mother sailed.”

“ Oh, father, speak, say on,” said Ellen, bending forward eagerly.

“ The one, a woman, young and beautiful ; the other a man, also young, and no unmeet match for her. Those two, my child, I have met to-day,—they are the wrecked family you spoke of,—the parents of the child I came to bury.”

“ Oh, father ! no wonder you are agitated at such a meeting ! Say,—what knew they of my mother ?”

“ Ellen, Ellen, my poor motherless, forgotten child ! how can I tell you ? That woman, Ellen, that childless, sorrowing woman, has now no child but you !”

“ Father, oh, father !—speak—tell me—that woman—young and beautiful—was she my mother ?”

“ It is your mother, my child, that I have seen to-day, a stricken, remorseful, broken-hearted woman.”

“My mother! that angel mother whose sweet face has so often looked on me in my dreams! That fair, young mother, before whose beautiful image, every day of my life, I have bent almost in worship! My mother, sick, suffering, and in sorrow, and I sitting idly here! Let me go, father, let me go to her,” said Ellen, with all Ada’s passionate impetuosity exciting her movements.

“Be calm, be quiet, my child, and hear the whole. Have you considered that your mother is voluntarily here. That of her own deliberate choice she forsook husband and child, home and country, duty, honor and God; giving love and allegiance to another; disregarding all the ties that bound her to me and my child; leaving me to mourn in desolate widowhood, and you to motherless orphanage. Concealing herself fifteen years from her friends, and living a life of dishonor and crime? Ellen, it pains me to tell you all this, but I deem it right.”

Ellen had sunk on her knees, and buried her face in the cushions of the sofa, as her father told his terrible tale.

“And *my* mother has done all this? What must have been the infernal art which could tempt her to such a deed? Who the wretch dishonoring to manhood, who could mislead a woman like her?”

“Alas, my child, she has not that poor plea, treacherous alike to him and to me. The noble, high-minded man she beguiled and blighted, knew not, till he heard to-day from my lips, that she was not free from every tie. He had heard of me as her cousin, and has endeavored to prevail on her to let him take her to her English home and her early friends; this of course she could not do. Her life, my child, has been one long act of dissimulation, over which let us now linger no longer. I have told you all I

know, Ellen. I seek not to influence you. You shall see her if you wish."

Ellen did not speak for some time. At length she asked :

"Did she wish to see me? Did she ask about me? Has she any interest in me?"

"She did not ask to be permitted to see you. But do not think, Ellen, that she has ever forgotten or ceased to yearn for her first-born child. She has been a wretched, conscience-stricken woman, hiding herself from all intercourse with society, shifting from place to place, having no abiding home, shunning acquaintance, and making no friends."

"Father—did you meet that man?"

"I did, Ellen, and pitied him. I could not, when I had learned the truth, feel any resentment toward him. His wrong is greater than mine."

"And were you kind and gentle with my poor mother? Did you forgive as you would be forgiven?"

"I did, fully and freely. She was broken and contrite in spirit. It is not for man to condemn, when God can pardon. I could not look on her, in her broken-hearted agony, and let any indignant feeling find harbor in my heart."

"And Clarence De Koven knows all this? How shall I meet his eye?" said Ellen, the blush of mortified womanhood burning on her cheek. "He saved them on the sea; he has known and loved them; he loved their children, and he sorrows for them now. I saw the deep grief on his face when they told him the boy was dead. Oh! how shall I ever again meet his eye?"

Ellen blushed deeper than before; covering her burn-

ing face with her trembling hands, and sinking down on her knees, she bent her head on the cushions and wept her first bitter tears. Oh, the first great grief, how it wrings and wrenches the heart, blotting out all the bright visions of the future, poisoning with regret and pain the sweet memories of the past! Nurtured in the bosom of a secluded, happy home, petted, cherished, and caressed, Ellen had never known a sorrow, and now to meet such an overwhelming blow as this! Her mother, upon whose portrait, hanging at the foot of her bed, her first conscious look had been lifted every morning of her life, ever looking down upon her with those mild, loving eyes, mingling their peace-giving associations in her thoughts, with her earliest devotions—her mother, whose name had been ever breathed among their sweet household words, a synonym for purity and blessedness; here a living and breathing reality! a voluntary outcast from honor and truthfulness! a wilful reproach and blot upon womanhood! Lower and lower she bowed down her beautiful head, cowering down, that sweet, sorrowing girl, to shut out the tormenting remembrance. Oh! how was her gladness overshadowed? How, for her, had the poetry of life passed away, and the sweet dream of her early years departed forever?

Atherton paced the room, and waited quietly for the first turbulence of sorrow to subside in Ellen's heart, before he attempted any suggestions of comfort. Deeply as it pained him to see her grief, he felt that she was learning a life-abiding lesson. It was the chastening appointed to her, and what warrant had he that she might not need it? Was not Ada young and fair, and to all outward seeming, pure? Was she not as carefully, prayerfully

and tenderly reared and instructed? and yet, what had been the result? He spoke at length:

"Come, Ellen, compose yourself now. You have had no tea. Arrange your disordered dress, and prepare yourself to go down. We both need refreshment. We must bear this, my child, bravely and patiently. It is the cross appointed to us; let us not sink under it; we are not the greatest sufferers. Think of her, childless, bereaved, forsaken in her solitary grief, and thank God, that your sorrow brings with it no sting of self-reproach."

"I do think of her, and my heart reproaches me, that I have been lamenting more my own wounded pride than her bleeding heart. Oh! she is my mother not the less, and shall strangers watch over her in sickness, and minister to her in sorrow, and her child so near? Who should bear with, pity, love, and cling to her, if I cannot? Let me go to her, father, I can comfort and tend her as none other can. Oh, let me go to her now, when her need is the sorest!"

"You shall see her, if she wishes it, but not to-night; all agitation has been forbidden. It is not safe for her to see you to-night."

"Is she then so weak as that? I can lose no time—I must go to her, dear father. I must—I will obey you always, in everything; only indulge me in this, dear father, only in this."

"Not to-night, Ellen, it is impossible; to-morrow, if she wishes it, I will take you to see her."

The tea bell rang, and Atherton insisted that Ellen should go down. "It will be no easier to-morrow, and we must meet this. If curious eyes are upon us, what matters it? it is nothing new to be looked at."

Ellen revered her father. She composed herself, adjusted her disheveled tresses, and went calmly down. The great hotel table was crowded, but if any there knew aught of the peculiar circumstances of the newly arrived guests, the knowledge was not betrayed by a glance, and Ellen passed the dreaded ordeal without any annoyance.

"Ellen," said Atherton, as they were taking a slow promenade on the piazza after tea, "De Koven has promised to call late in the evening to bring me intelligence from our friends up the street. You can retire to the parlor or not, as you please. I shall remain below to await Clarence."

Ellen prepared to retire, and withdrew to the room above. She could not, in this first hour of her deep humiliation, brook the thought of meeting De Koven. He had been their companion in so many pleasant scenes; meeting, as they had done so often, at hotels, and on the great thoroughfares of fashionable travel, an intimacy had been established between them, beyond that ordinarily the result of casual companionship. On their part it had been at first purely accidental. By De Koven it had been sought with a premeditated purpose; to solve the strange doubts which had long since arisen in his mind with regard to Ada; to ascertain, so far as possible, without open explanation with Atherton, the strong facts of the case, and shield and save Evelyn from the sudden discovery of circumstances so utterly unthought of. But, in seeking to unravel the web in which his friend was entangled, he had inadvertently set his own foot in a mesh: and his sympathies were now deeply enlisted for the calm, dignified, companionable English clergyman, and his artless, affable daughter. To prevent the meeting, which, on learning

their contemplated visit to Boston, and subsequently to Montauk, he felt to be inevitable, he had first delayed, and afterwards hastened his visit to Sea-spray. But he was too late. The dreaded meeting had taken place; he could do nothing now, but stand as mediator and moderator between them. With Atherton no moderator was needed. With him truth was truth, and justice, justice; and he bound their simple, unmistakable teachings upon his own conscience, when his own feelings and interests were involved, as honestly and unflinchingly as when examining and deciding for others.

With Evelyn his task was more difficult. His sphere of action and influence had been brought within very narrow and circumscribed limits — himself and the little dependent circle of which he formed the centre. This, from its peculiar character and helplessness, engrossed all his feelings and energies; which, though honest, elevated, refined and truthful, were not expansive. With noble principles, purity and pride in his own heart, he had given little heed to the beatings of the great human pulse. He had not studied the heart of his fellow, and learned to judge, analyze and separate its passions and impulses, to trace home to their sources and springs its errors, to weigh and examine its motives and temptations; spreading over all the mantle of Christian forbearance and charity, to pity and pardon where he could not amend. At the thought of dishonor, his hot southern blood coursed in mad bounds through his veins, gushing back in fiery floods on his heart. With him, in his wrathful excitement, De Koven found it difficult to reason or to plead. He wanted time to let his irritated temper cool, to look into and school his heart; to teach himself patience, and to look without, and above, and beyond himself, for peace.

So De Koven bade him good-night, and left him to take counsel of his pillow, while he returned to bear tidings to Atherton of the situation of Ada.

It was little he could say beyond the fact, that the tempest of feeling had left her calm and silent, but helplessly prostrate ; that gentle guardianship was over her, and that for kind care and skilful attendance she could not want.

The apartment which Ellen occupied in the commodious and well-directed hotel, (now full of guests, but quiet as any private residence on the street,) overlooked the principal street and promenade of Sea-spray. It was early, and as she had no wish to retire, she extinguished her light, and sat down amid the screening drapery of the window, concealed from observation by its snowy folds, and looked out upon the scene, to her so new and strange.

It was one of those brilliant, moonlight evenings on which Sea-spray shines forth in her sheeniest splendors, cool and calm in her balmy redolence, bright and beautiful to look out upon, but like many of earth's glittering seemings, dangerous from her chill clinging damps, to touch or trifle with. In the distance spread the Atlantic, its unruffled surface gleaming in the moonbeams like a field of fire ; nearer, in the fields, in green acres, stood the sturdy corn, every long, pendant leaf shining with moon-lit moisture ; and nearer still, the tall trees, the long, graceful branches almost sweeping the house, their leaves quivering in burnished beauty, while, gleaming through them, the sifted radiance floated on the smooth, green sod. The walk was thronged with groups of happy children, propelling their little carriages, trundling their hoops, or chasing their toys or their gleeful mates, with whoop, and call, and shouts of thoughtless joy. Laughing girls tripped along, with sweet,

singing voices, fearless of care, and strangers to trouble. Young men strolled leisurely up and down, with cigars between their teeth, often a gentleman, and oftener a bad personation of one. Knots of substantial looking personages were gathered about in deep, earnest discourse, discussing sage questions of vital political import, of immense weight in their bearings upon the close coming election. Little cautious caucusings were being held around trees, or along the line of high board fences, concerting measures preliminary to primary meetings, or nominating conventions, while just within convenient hearing distance, stood an eager listener, peeling an apple, and looking innocently up at the moon, pretending not to notice, but swallowing every word for future use and capital somewhere.

All these passing figures and stationary groupings met the listless gaze of the fair stranger who looked out upon them, but had little interest or meaning for her. Poor little Sea-spray, which De Koven's conversation had invested with an ideal charm, was shorn of all its attractions, and doomed to be henceforth associated only with thoughts of sorrow. The peaceful landscape, which last night she would so have joyed to look upon, was all darkened to her vision now. The eye, which would have brightened at its beauty, was dimmed with tears. The heart, which would have warmed, was sunken and sad. It was all lost. A light, bounding step echoed along the walk, and a figure approached which Ellen could not mistake. She bent slightly forward to look, as her father came out from the shadow of the piazza, and joining De Koven, walked away with him, in earnest discourse. Ellen dropped her head on the window-sill, to hide the burning blush there was none to witness, as she thought.

"All this sin and shame is known to him! Oh, miserable mother, what ruin you have wrought for yourself and all connected with you!—and yet—what is his opinion to us? What the sneers and scorn of all the world, that they should come between me and my suffering mother? Let him despise me if he will; he is nothing to me. Though all the world forsake and renounce me, for her sake, I will cling to her not the less."

Ellen drew from her bosom a miniature of Ada, taken in her early girlhood, and gazed on it through her tears.

"Can I ever associate thoughts of evil with an image like this? It cannot be that my mother is all depraved. I will not think it. If she is wandering in error and sin, it shall be mine to recall and reclaim her. If she is pining in rejection and penitence, it shall be mine to revive and console her."

A step at the door recalled her thoughts, and her father entered to inquire after her comfort, and to encourage and cheer her; repeating all he had learned from De Koven with regard to Ada, adding, as he concluded:

"She has kind and attached friends besides De Koven, who will not, in this trying crisis, look coldly upon her. Be comforted my child. This is but a fleeting cloud over your morning brightness; it will soon pass away; and your heart will be the wiser for its brief overshadowing."

He laid his book on the table, and there, in the silvery moonlight, beneath a strange roof, in a strange land, the father and daughter knelt together in their lonely devotions, lifting their hearts to the same ever present God, in the same blessed words as in their own loved land and 'neath the hallowed roof of their own far off home. They parted then for the night, and soon stillness wrapt

little Sea-spray, sparkling, unheeded, in her silvery dewiness ; and the silent moon walked on, looking down on sorrow and on joy, on soft, refreshing slumbers, and on pillows wet with tears ; on parted lips smiling in sweet dreams, and on faces writhing with fierce passions, and forms tossing to and fro in sleepless, harrassing disquietude ; on hopeful, happy hearts, and bruised and broken ones, thrown by mysterious guidance beneath one roof, in close, unconscious neighborhood ; casting on all her cold, incurious beams ; shining at once on evil and on good, heedless alike who sorrowed or who slumbered.

So, Sea-spray slept in the solemn night, with no sound breaking over her slumbers, but the ocean moaning and murmuring to the whispering south wind ; and sometimes to break the poetical charm and spirituality of the Eden-like scene, the cry of a sleepless watch-dog baying in the distance, or the shrill discordant voice of a sentinel goose calling out the relief guard.

CHAPTER XXX.

DE KOVEN and Hardy were sitting after breakfast in Hardy's pleasant parlor enjoying an unconstrained lounge, and an easy, rambling, desultory chat about anything, and everything, and nothing in particular. There had been a pause, which De Koven broke by asking, somewhat abruptly :

"Do you remember, Hardy, a remark you made the first evening of our acquaintance, in reply to my impatient, discontented query on the subject of Edith's death, that 'it was ordered in mercy?'"

"I remember you were rather disposed to question the justice of the Great Disposer in that case. What calls it up now?"

"The fact that I see already your words were true, and that it was in great mercy the poor little sensitive, helpless thing was taken from this world before the evil days came that have come."

"I generally intend to understand what I am talking about when I talk; and I calculate my words will come out for the most part not very wide of the mark," replied Hardy, tilting his chair back on its hinder legs, and inserting his thumbs in the armholes of his vest.

"They have come out right in this instance, certainly.

How is it, Hardy, that in matters of this kind, some can see so clearly, while others are always in the dark? Some all faith, and others all doubt or indifference?"

"I suppose the difficulty is within themselves. Some are too proud to *trust*; they must *know*. They must reason and argue, have judgment convinced and doubts solved, crooked things laid straight, and dark things made light, and puzzling things made plain. Is it not so with you? Are you not seeking to be guided by your own wisdom, and to stand in your own strength?"

"Perhaps I am," replied De Koven, a little sadly. "'Whoso trusteth in his own heart is a fool,'" is the declaration of Holy Writ, and who shall dare to gainsay its sacred authority; for who has not found, in the bitterness of his own experience, ample and painful conviction of its truth? Who that has listened to, and been beguiled by the whisperings of its wild and wayward imaginings, is not ready to admit that the deceitfulness of his own heart has betrayed him, and to exclaim, in the hour of disappointment and disgust, truly saith the Preacher: 'This also is vanity and vexation of spirit.'"

"Very true, my good friend," replied Hardy; "I am glad to hear you acknowledge it. You will find it so to the end of the chapter."

"And yet," resumed De Koven, scarcely heeding Hardy's reply—"and yet, notwithstanding the examples and warnings which our own cheated hopes afford us, we go forth trusting in our own wisdom, and yielding ourselves willing dupes to our own idle delusions. But when we look back upon the path which we have trod, and mark the many arid and sterile spots which lie as landmarks along its course, can we forbear to acknowledge that we have failed

to order our steps aright, and that, trusting to our own hearts, they have led us astray?"

"Even-so. You seem pretty well read in the history of a heart left to its own guidance, and take a right Scriptural view. You are coming on, and I think there are some hopes of you yet," said Hardy, amused at the unusual seriousness of his companion.

"Well, I suppose, Hardy, that which was true of man in the days of the wise man continues true to the present day; for ages, as they roll, take not one jot or tittle from the eternity of God's truth. In every succeeding age man is the same. The customs and manners which one period sanctions another may condemn, for the fashion of this world soon passes away; but in the inherent qualities of the heart man changes not. He is the same being of selfish passions, actuated by the same feelings, whether good or evil; a slave to the same propensities, and liable to the same infirmities. The same invincible love of life and its empty, illusive enjoyments is implanted in his heart, and the same chilling dread of death holds dominion over him. The same jealousies and enmities to embitter, and the same kindly affections to soothe and sweeten life, are nourished in his breast; and so, from age to age man is the same, only varying in degrees of virtue or vice, as good or evil predominates in that strange blending of contradictory qualities, the human heart. And so he will continue to be, long after you and I, Hardy, have played out our parts and gone down to the dust."

De Koven rose as he spoke, with the intention of seeking Evelyn. The painful lessons he had been reading in the last few hours had depressed and disheartened him. The deep, deep sin staining the character of one whom he had

been accustomed to regard with respect and affectionate admiration, and the consequent shame and sorrow it had entailed upon the friend he so much loved, had shaken sadly his faith in self-sustaining strength, and taken from him, in a great measure, his sturdy, self-relying pride. Hardy also rose to go forth to the bustling business occupations of every day life, with the cheerfulness which honorable and useful avocations, actively pursued, always engender in well-balanced minds.

De Koven encountered Allen coming to summon him. He found Evelyn unable to rise. The long wearying watch he had been keeping night and day by Ernest's couch, the wasting wearisomeness of grief, followed by the exhausting emotions of yesterday, were telling now upon his frame in pain and lassitude, utterly disqualifying him for any physical exertion. When he awoke from his fitful, feverish slumbers, and attempted to rise, he found, to his dismay, that he had not the strength to do so.

Allen, with kind inquiries, was early at his bed-side, and after some consultations with his friends in the family, Evelyn dispatched him for De Koven. De Koven grasped the burning hand which Evelyn extended to him, saying:

"You will have to keep still a day or two, and let us nurse you. I trust this is nothing serious. You will be none the worse for a little rest."

"Rest, De Koven, rest! when my only salvation is flight! When duty, and manhood, and honour, all urge me to be up and away! Oh, this accursed, disabling childishness, that it should chain me here now!"

"Don't distress yourself about that. Every one who knows aught of this sad affair, knows that your honor is without stain."

"Without stain, indeed!" replied Evelyn, turning his head impatiently on his pillow; "who will believe that report? Has not my whole course of life given the lie to it? Flitting from place to place without home or continuing city, known nowhere but as a bird of passage, a vagabond, fleeing before the fear of pursuit and detection? The thief of another man's wife, scared at the hue and cry of the rabble behind him? I cannot lie here. Help me up, De Koven—let me be off,—I *will* go."

The effort was vain, and Evelyn sunk back in chafing, futile wrath, upon his pillow.

"Evelyn, Evelyn, this is madness and folly—it is unlike and unworthy yourself. The picture you have drawn is but the conjuring-up of a sick fancy; there is neither reason nor reality in it."

"Perhaps you are right," said Evelyn, with a hesitating and abstracted expression—"perhaps you are; but it is so tantalizing to be broken down and detained here now, when the only thing I could do was to take myself away. Well, since it is so, I must lie here and look dishonor tamely in the face, like the pitiful scoundrel men will take me for." The fire gleamed up again in his dark, lustrous eye, and his cheek flushed with more than fever's heat.

"Nonsense, Evelyn, you vex me with clinging to that absurd idea. Do you think," said De Koven, laughing, "do you think such a magnificent fellow as Clarence De Koven would lend you the light of his countenance, if there was such a word as *disgrace* coupled with your name?"

"I do not think you would desert a friend in his extremity, De Koven, whatever you might think of his deserts. I know you will acquit me of guilt in this matter; with your

intimate knowledge of all the circumstances, you could not do otherwise. I will try to be more patient. As you say, I am changed. This irritable, angry mood makes me a stranger to myself. My trials have hitherto been softening; touching only the springs of tenderness. I did not know that I carried within me a temper so fierce and undisciplined. I must try to curb and restrain it. I find," continued he, as if speaking to his own thoughts, "there are some excruciating situations, in which men do not so readily recognize the hand of God, and to which they cannot at once apply the balm of religious consolations. This is one of them. Shall I let it tempt me to forget my humble, childlike trust in my Heavenly Father, and my patient, prayerful acquiescence in His will?"

Evelyn covered his face with his hot, throbbing hands, and lifted his heart on high, while De Koven silently bowed his head with the newly awakened desire, hardly a conscious prayer, for faith, and grace, and guidance.

"Now, let me ask, De Koven, what of her? Is she calm? is she submissive? My heart is grieved for her sufferings, but I may not soothe it! Alas!—who can?"

It was painful to De Koven to reply to the question of his friend, but he could not evade it. Ada had passed a disturbed, miserable night; her mind unsettled, and her words wandering and incoherent. Evelyn groaned and shuddered, but he was helpless himself. In no case could he sustain and comfort, and now,—ah, it was better as it was,—God had ordered; it was not left to his volition.

"You can have no anxiety with regard to her personal comfort—everything is cared for. At present she does not suffer from the consciousness of your absence, or the cause of it. Keep yourself quiet,—you will recruit in a day or

two; and then, I will go with you,—to the world's end, if you say so. Time will make smooth all this rough passage. There is fair weather ahead,—take a sailor's word for it," said De Koven, cheerfully, laying his hand on Evelyn's.

"You are kind, De Koven—I thank you. Time will not give me back my dead, Clarence."

The soft chord was touched in the father's heart, and the tears welled up and overflowed.

"No, but eternity will," said De Koven, with an assurance in his own heart, to which it had hitherto been a stranger.

"I should be wretched indeed, did I not believe so. I think, dear, generous De Koven, I will claim your promise of companionship, as soon as I am able to travel and go abroad with you. And yet, poor Ada, the mother of my loved, lost children, it seems cruel and unmanly to desert her now. Act for me, Clarence, I am weak and womanish."

"You need have no misgivings on her account. She has had many conversations with our friend, Mr. Alden, on this subject. Her mind was fully prepared, before the arrival of Atherton, for a speedy separation from you. Atherton is a Christian and a gentleman. He feels that, though no more his wife, she still has claims of consanguinity upon him, which he fully recognizes; and we all concur in the feeling, that the care of protecting her with more propriety devolves upon him. Her daughter is anxious to be with her, and will be her best companion and comforter. Divest yourself of all anxiety on her account, and get well as fast as you can. We will see sunny days yet."

"You are young and sanguine," said Evelyn, sadly,

"but send my little friend, Allen, to sit with me, and go you among your friends. Possibly I may sleep."

De Koven did as he was desired. A soothing anodyne was administered to Evelyn, and with Allen sitting quietly by his bedside he soon fell into deep, renovating slumber. It was as De Koven had said. Ada had passed a wild, feverish, sleepless night, moaning and calling in pathetic pleadings for her children; sometimes roaming happily, and holding gay and lively discourse with the friends, and mid the scenes of her early home; walking with her father along green, forest paths, or bending with Atherton over the cradle of her first-born babe. Then, with a dreamy, half-consciousness caressing her mute child, or wringing her hands in anguish over her dying Ernest, or beseeching the forgiveness, and *déprecating* the displeasure, of Walter. She, too, had now fallen into a deep, heavy sleep, from which they were hoping beneficial effects, and over which they were anxiously watching. De Koven looked in for a moment on the pale sleeper with many conflicting emotions, then turned away and sought Atherton, who was awaiting him at the hotel. Ellen still kept in the retirement of her own room, waiting the intelligence which De Koven had promised Atherton to obtain for him.

CHAPTER XXXI.

"Not yet, Ellen, not yet," continued Atherton, after having acquainted her with the particulars of Ada's situation, "we will see in what state she awakes. If she is in a calm, conscious state, it may be injudicious to agitate her. If she is still delirious, it will be of no service to her, and uselessly distressing to you."

"And that man, papa; I wish he could get away. I can't meet him."

"Ellen, my dear child, that feeling is natural; but in his case it is not right. In all this miserable business, the cruelest wrong has been inflicted on him. When I look on you, my own beloved child, and remember how I found him in his broken-hearted misery, prostrate on these little graves, despoiled of everything, and standing on this wide world alone, with none to soothe or share his sorrow, I cannot forbear acknowledging that, great as is my trial, his is incomparably greater. My dear Ellen, you must not be ungenerous or unjust. Divest yourself, as far as possible, of all feelings of dislike for this unfortunate man, whose destiny has been so strangely interwoven with our own. It may not be necessary that you should meet. It would be as undesirable to him, perhaps, as you. But one consideration, my child: circumstances will probably arise, under

which you may find it difficult to act, if you act under the influence of strongly prejudiced feelings now. Remember, De Koven is his dearest, indeed his only friend. You would not willingly cast a shadow on his path by coming between them?"

"Oh, father! what strange words. Surely, surely I would not, if I could, do a thing so cruel."

The blood rushed in crimson floods over Ellen's cheek and brow; but there was no dissembling in her nature, and every thought of her heart, in its transparent truthfulness, was open to her father.

"Be patient, Ellen, and composed. I am going out to walk with De Koven. You shall have the first intelligence I can procure for you. There is healing for all earth's wounds, my child. You have not been left till your hour of need, to learn where to seek it. I will not leave you long."

"How coolly men take things," thought Ellen, as a smile mingled itself, like a timid, unbidden guest, with her blushes and streaming tears.

Atherton and De Koven bent their steps towards the Beach in conversation, at first general and of little interest, but gradually coming home to subjects in which the happiness of both was deeply involved, and which they had now for the first time explicitly discussed.

"You are precipitate, my young friend. I cannot permit you to commit yourself so hastily. I feel deeply the generosity of your proposals at a time like this; but I should be unworthy your confidence, could I accept them now," said Atherton, somewhat agitated.

"I am aware that I am presuming, upon so brief an acquaintance, thus to ask of you your daughter," resumed De

Koven. "I am almost a stranger in my own land, with none but business connections, and no credentials to back my pretensions ; but I am impelled to throw myself on your kindness, thus abruptly, because, as I told you, I have made business arrangements which imperatively demand my presence in Europe, and because I have pledged myself to Evelyn to take him away as soon as he is able to travel. I beg you will take these things into consideration, and pardon my eager presumption."

"You do not rightly apprehend me, dear De Koven," replied Atherton. "You are young and ardent ; you overlook things, which a father, or a cool, dispassionate friend would view with less indulgence, and to whose objections I should feel bound to yield respectful deference."

"Thank God, then, that I have no such cool, calculating friends," said De Koven, impetuously. "My noble-hearted father would have disowned me for his son, if he had supposed me capable of such mean, temporizing heartlessness."

"Since you have, as you say, no such friend, and will not think for yourself, I feel constrained to think for you, in this thing at least. I see great objections *for* you, none *to* you. Last week, dear, noble Clarence, I could have wept tears of joy over you, and devoutly thanked God for giving my child such a protector. But the aspect of things is sadly changed in twenty-four hours."

"The change has wrought no change in my feelings. I only love and revere you the more for the sorrow that is upon you. Why should it operate in this way with you?"

"It is right that I consider it in its inevitable bearings

upon me and mine. I try to bear the thing patiently, and not to feel the stain it brings on my family pride, so certain do I feel that none darkens my personal honor. But I know how these sad affairs in families are regarded in the great world, to whose decisions we are all compelled, more or less, to bow. I know that at home, were these circumstances known, (and I should seek no concealment,) my poor Ellen would be rejected in marriage for their sons by every proud family of her own station in life."

De Koven clenched his hand with a gesture of angry impatience, as though he longed to bring his knuckles in contact with that thought in some tangible form; but he said nothing, and Atherton went on:

"It bears hard on individual cases, I know," replying to the feeling that flashed in De Koven's gesture; "but as a general principle it is right. It is conservative in its influence upon society. With many, fear of the 'world's dread laugh' is more potent than the restraints of virtuous principles, the promptings of generous sympathies, or the prohibitions of God's laws. You have not considered the question deliberately; you have not duly weighed the risks you are incurring. I must do it for you."

"Risks! what possible risk can I be exposing myself to in following out the only path to happiness I have ever found, and seeking hope and home in a union with you and yours?" asked De Koven, spiritedly.

"The risk of a long, lonely, widowed life like mine," replied Atherton, with a quivering lip.

"Were you any but her father that dared to utter such a thought!" said De Koven, with a hot, hasty gesture, and a kindling eye.

"Ah, Clarence, Clarence, if not from her father, in his

unbounded love, can this be borne, how will you brook it in taunts from other tongues? See you not that I am right?" said Atherton, in calm sadness.

"No; I cannot see right in any supposition of such a possibility as applied to your daughter. The suggestion is preposterous, insulting to her. What, Ellen, so pure, so shrinking in her retiring delicacy? How utterly absurd!"

De Koven could not move on at the slow, sauntering pace with which they were strolling along the shore. He bounded on as if he would outwalk the wrath that stirred him, then stopped abruptly, and turning his face to the sea, folded his arms, and stood erect and motionless, as Atherton replied in low, sad tones:

"I thank you for your warmth in defence of one so dear. Think not with me it was needed. But, Clarence, bethink you: Ada was young and lovely—tenderly cherished—deeply, devotedly loved. Like your warm enthusiastic faith in her child, was my implicit faith in her. I would have staked my life, even my soul's life, on her purity! You know how mistaken was that trust."

"Yes; but the circumstances are so different. You had been brought up from childhood together; you were like brother and sister. Perhaps she had mistaken the character of her attachment to you, and there was so much in the peculiar position in which she stood towards Evelyn—so much to attract and bind her to him."

"I have looked at the case in all its phases; be assured I have not lost sight of this. I do see that Evelyn is one to attract and rivet love. I do see that she was tempted beyond her strength. I do see all the excuse the circumstances afford her, and my conscience gives her the benefit of it. Sin against their self-love, though, De Koven, is

the one men are of all others least ready to forgive. All I require of you now is, that for your own sake you will take time to consider ; that you will not bind yourself by any pledges or promises, or seek to win any from Ellen. Let this painful period pass with as little added excitement as may be. Let us go home, and if, after one year has elapsed, your feelings are not changed, then come to us. You have my unqualified consent to win Ellen, if you can. Do you agree to this ?”

“If this is the best you can do for me, I must. Does this debar me from pleading my own cause with Ellen ?”

“On this particular subject it must, of course, or where would be the use of all my wise restrictions ? One word to her would involve the committal from which it is my care to guard you. Leave it to me. I give you my word that till your year has passed, no one, with my knowledge, shall come between you and my daughter’s affections. Be content with that. I think you may be.”

De Koven acquiesced with the best grace he could in a restriction by no means pleasant ; and they walked on, taking their way along the Beach and over the bridges, coming into the street from a point opposite the one by which they had left it, and passing with saddened hearts the graves by the side of which they had witnessed so much suffering. Stopping to inquire after Evelyn and Ada, they found Evelyn refreshed by sleep and tranquil, but unable to rise ; and Ada weak and helpless, but clear in intellect, and calm. Atherton stepped softly in, and stood by the side of her couch, with a mild and solemn expression on his pale, broad brow.

Ada lifted her languid lids as his step drew nigh, and her glance met his, but it did not quail, and her words came low and sweet :

“Ernest, dear, kind, forgiving Ernest! This world is fading fast, and I have little more to do with its sorrows or its joys. I would nerve my heart for its last earthly trials. I would meet my child, Ernest, and I would look my last on Walter Evelyn. That over, I have nothing more in this life to desire or dread. May I look once on my forsaken child? Will she forget my great sin, in this my dying hour? Will she bless with one forgiving look a few fleeting moments of her mother’s last weary hours?”

“Believe me, my poor Ada, she is even more anxious to come to you than you are that she should. Can you be composed if I bring her to stay with you? Can you bear the agitation?”

“I can bear anything now, Ernest. Since this tormenting secret has been lifted from my soul, so long borne down beneath its benumbing pressure, I can look up, and forward: up to Him who can pity and pardon, and forward to the rest that redeeming Love has purchased and prepared.”

Atherton stood a few moments, silently looking on the pale and sunken face once so dear; but he gave no utterance to the thoughts that crowded upon him. Ada was exhausted, her eyes closed in weariness, and she said no more.

Alice resumed the seat she had vacated on Atherton’s entrance, and he stepped noiselessly out. De Koven came down from Evelyn’s room, and they walked away together. Allen kept his station in the room of Evelyn with quiet and gentle watchfulness, while Evelyn rested and reflected. Alice kept her silent watch by Ada, who had again fallen into calm sleep. The deep silence which reigned in the house was broken by a sharp, quick tread on the walk, and Mrs. Thorn cantered in, with her everlasting basket.

Alice quietly laid her hand on the latch of the door opening into the room in which Ada was sleeping, and after several ineffectual attempts to raise it, Mrs. Thorn turned and made her way by another route to the kitchen. Leena looked up as she entered, with a gruff "Good morning, Mrs. Thorn," and went on quietly stoning the raisins for Dury's cake, while Dury poked and punched the fire in the oven with alarming accession of zeal.

"You might save your credit and ask me to take off my bonnet, for I'm in a hurry, and I should not stay if you did," said Mrs. Thorn, flouncing into a chair, and untying her bonnet with a jerk.

"I'll *ask* you, then, with great pleasure, Mrs. Thorn, to take off your bonnet and dine with us; we shall have dinner some time to-day, I can't tell when."

"I can't stay — Mr. Thorn has come, and as our friends all seem to be so much taken up with themselves or strangers," said Mrs. Thorn, significantly, "we shall leave in a day or two. I think, from the stories I hear, folks that are so 'careful to entertain strangers,' don't always catch angels."

"I cannot dispute your words on that subject, Mrs. Thorn; for you bring conviction along with you. I have Scripture warrant, however, for believing that it may happen sometimes."

"I don't know but you will make them welcome; its more than you do for all your visitors. Well, I thought I would just step in and show you this;" and Mrs. Thorn took from her basket a linen pocket-handkerchief, and carefully unfolding it, displayed one or two breaks in the threads, which required delicate darning.

"There — I must say, when I trust my clothes to be washed where I am visiting, I expect to have them more

carefully looked to. Do you let Dury wring your clothes to rags in this way?"

"I don't hold her accountable if they wear out," said Leena, laughing, — "that would be hardly fair; but I am sorry if you have sustained any injury."

"It is no great, to be sure; but she did not do up my things well at all. I thought I would tell you. I always tell folks where I visit, if I see anything wrong. It's a trait. We all have our traits."

"I'll replace your handkerchief, Mrs. Thorn, with a new one, and you may give Dury the one you say she has injured," said Leena, handing Mrs. Thorn an unhemmed handkerchief from her work-basket.

"I don't know about that. It is as much work to hem this as the old one is worth. I can mend it, and it would not be of much use to Dury," said Mrs. Thorn, quietly putting both in her basket, and rising as she did so to take her departure. "Well, I don't know when I shall see you again. I don't expect you will ever be coming our way."

"Perhaps I may, Mrs. Thorn. I have relatives in your vicinity," said Leena, maliciously seeking to alarm the visiting lady.

"I don't know if I shall be keeping house if you do," said Mrs. Thorn, hastily. "We spend our summers visiting around among our friends. But if I don't come here again, I shall be very happy to see you in heaven." With this cordial invitation never to return her visits, Mrs. Thorn took her leave for an indefinite period, Dury giving vent to her indignation as she closed the door, by saying, "Oh Guh! wonder eff Miss Thorn's got a through ticket? See you in heaven! aint that mighty?" Again the house was wrapped in silence, and hours stole quietly away. Evelyn

musings silently on his bed, or talking at intervals in melancholy tones with Allen, of Ernest; of all his loving talk, and gentle, winning truthfulness of heart. Ada had been sleeping tranquilly, waking at times, and turning a languid look on Alice, then sinking again quietly to rest.

The afternoon was drawing to a close. Ada began to grow restless, and at times a little wandering; listening to every sound, but not impatiently. The nervous irritability of temper, which she had so long exhibited, had all vanished. Patiently, uncomplainingly, she waited to be summoned to her rest. The feverish flush was again coming over her, when Atherton returned, and with him, his pale, trembling daughter.

Ada heard his step, and her heart beat quick and chokingly. "Mother," said a soft, sweet, tremulous voice. A fair form knelt by her bed-side, and a lovely face, with tearful eyes, bent over her. Ada gasped and panted. "Mother, dear mother, let me stay by you now; let me never leave you, nor forsake you; let me watch, and tend, and cheer, and comfort you."

There was no need of an answer; but Ada twined her arms around the neck of her child, and hid her face, writhing with shame and anguish, among her clustering locks, sobbing at length faintly and brokenly,—

"Ellen, my daughter, can you forgive me? My own deserted darling, can you come with gentle, loving words to soothe my parting hours?"

"I have come to claim my place beside you. Be at peace, dear mother, we will part no more."

Ada sunk back upon her pillow, with Ellen's hand clasped in hers, and again deep sleep stole over her.

"I fear, my child," said Atherton, bending down to listen

to her faint, low breathing, —“I fear this agitation has been too great for her. This sleep is deep and heavy.”

He turned to Col. Hesselten, who had entered, and was standing silently by the bed-side :

“She will probably rally after a long, deep sleep, but not many times. She may linger some days—not many. She has been very frail a long time. I have expected this.”

Ellen sat down to her first watch beside her new-found mother, and Atherton went to the apartment in which Evelyn was making his constrained abode.

The meeting of these two men, so singularly situated with regard to each other, could not be otherwise than an awkward one. Evelyn knew that, however involuntarily on his part, he had, nevertheless, come a blighting shadow between Atherton and his domestic happiness. He felt this painfully, and his tone and manner were hesitating and embarrassed.

“This is very kind,” said he, coloring deeply, in reply to Atherton’s cordial expressions of interest and regret, as he inquired after his health—“this generous forgetfulness of the part I have played in this strange real life drama. I cannot divest myself of the feeling that I have been (God knows how unwittingly) the bane of your earthly peace. I feel this, as I know it cannot but appear to you and to others. And yet,” said he, with a flashing eye, and a proud, lofty tone, “I can make no humiliating concessions. I cannot apologize for a wrong not intentionally inflicted.”

“I come with no accusations in my heart against you. I have fully and freely acquitted you. I regret that you should feel it otherwise. I cannot say that I have not weighed it in all its bearings. It was natural that grieved

affection and wounded self-love (call it mortified personal vanity if you will) should seek balm for their own smarting ills. It was natural that love for the erring object of so much woe and sorrow should seek excuses for *her* by visiting censure upon *you*. I did look carefully for truth, but her own undeviating testimony, and De Koven's, corroborate your statements. I could not doubt you if I would. I have no wish to do so. Besides, why should we doubt the directing hand of a Higher Power in all this? But for the generous impulse of compassion, which prompted you to risk your life for hers, you had both been lost. It is not for me to judge; but I would ask, have not these fifteen years been worth the price? Admitting that here they ended, have not their joys more than counterbalanced their sorrows?"

"In the blessed memory of my children, yes. I would not have their cherished remembrance blotted from my heart, and their loved images replaced by others, for any form of joy that earth could offer. To have owned and lost them, is more of blessedness than life could have brought without them. And for the dim, lonely future, its path will be less wearisome, with these pure spirits beckoning at its end."

Evelyn ended by extending his hand to Atherton, who rose to take his leave, as Mr. Alden entered with De Koven.

After some interchange of kind inquiries, Mr. Alden addressed himself to Evelyn, with a tinge of sadness in his pleasant, earnest tones: "I have brought our young friend here, because I know your testimony has great weight with him, that you may help me to combat some of his fallacious, speculative theories."

"What is it, De Koven? Come, I can't have you going wrong, now that I have committed myself to your guidance. What's wrong in your theological premises?"

"Oh, we can't exactly agree in our views of poor human nature. I think Mr. Alden insists too strongly upon the utter depravity of the heart. I insist there is much of beauty, perchance, as he says, a little too much of boldness, in the proposition sometimes advanced, that there is implanted in every heart an inextinguishable spark of Divine energy, emanating from God when he 'breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life,' giving intellect, intelligence and animation to the inert matter he had moulded in his own image, and making man a 'living soul.'"

"Ah! but De Koven," replied Evelyn, kindly, "who that looks carefully to the thoughts and imaginations of his own heart, is not constrained to acknowledge that they are only 'evil, and that continually?'"

"Nevertheless, there is beauty and grandeur in the thought that with our natures (sinful and degraded, if you will please yourself with thinking so) there is combined a portion of the 'divine essence uncreate;' a spark, which may be fanned to bright and enduring flame by the purifying spirit of prayer; by the cultivation and exercise of those holy and hallowing emotions, which flow from, and are strengthened by, close and constant communings with God; by lifting our thoughts and our aspirations above the perishing beauties of earth and its fading adornments, and offering to our Maker that pure undefiled religion of the heart, which looks up to him in silence and in solitary places. I feel that this is worth all the doctrines, and dogmas, and antagonistical opinions which divines dignify with the epithet 'religion.'"

"Dear Clarence, I admit the truth of all this, provided you are not doing it on your own strength; purifying your heart by its own unaided efforts, forgetting that 'the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.' 'Not by might, nor by power; but by my spirit, saith the Lord.'"

"You are hardly fair with me," said De Koven, good-humoredly, "taking the wind out of my sails, by shooting alongside in this way with a text of scripture; for you know very well, that I should make but poor headway sailing on that tack."

"I find it is a hard matter to make our friend, the captain, admit natural inborn inclinations to evil," said Mr. Alden, pleasantly. "It is not so much to be wondered at in him; for I am satisfied that, in his own case, he has had little experimental knowledge of the verity of it. It is sometimes too charitable judgment, when we judge others by ourselves. I hope, as he journeys along through life, he will not have too severe teachings to lead him to that conviction."

After a little further chat the gentlemen took their leave—Mr. Alden with many kind expressions, and offers of attendance, and De Koven with the promise of returning to continue through the night.

CHAPTER XXXII.

LEFT alone and listless on his bed, Evelyn directed his thoughts from self and sorrowful associations, by pondering the subject which De Koven had discussed with so much spirit and feeling.

He knew that his friend clung to his favorite idea of intellectual and poetical religion, to the rejection of the humble and self-debasing teachings of the Gospel, and that he was restless and unsatisfied under its influence.

To the believer in human perfectability, the ambitious advocate and asserter of the supremacy of mind, the visionary and egotistical aspirant after self-attained immortality, there is much of sublimity and poetical beauty in the theories of heathen philosophy; much that is flattering and seductive in the dazzling systems of more modern reasoners. Men of high and splendid powers of intellect, of noble and enthusiastic spirit, have been misled by the speciousness of that system of ethics, which proclaims the innate dignity and moral grandeur of man, and spurns indignantly the humiliating idea of original, inborn, uncleanness of heart. The cool, calculating, conscientious moralist and utilitarian sees expediency in the doctrine which inculcates good will towards man; and while he practices all the charities and refined courtesies of life among his fellow creatures,

indulges the pride and deceitfulness of his heart, by withholding its homage from God. Alas, for such baseless structures! splendid and fallacious fables of man's invention! How they totter before the force and simplicity of Gospel truth, and prove the speciousness of the human heart, which seeks in its indomitable and "self-adoring pride," to exalt and deify itself, boasting its dignity, its beauty, its holiness, its almost divinity, and verifying by its vain and presumptuous reliance on its own powers, the truth of that holy assertion, "Behold, ye trust in lying words, that cannot profit."

Evelyn folded his hands over his aching brow, and his thoughts wandered away from this unsatisfactory theme to the scenes and events of his past life, tracing the way by which he had been led, till it was all rounded down to one point, where his thoughts paused and lingered. This was the summing up:—two little graves, in the simple, obscure village of Sea-spray! Here, in this remote, unnoted corner of this wide waste world, he had laid at rest, forever, the objects of hope and happiness for this life. Hence, he should go out on his lonely pilgrimage, not seeking pleasure, but avoiding sin. Even the sad indulgence of lingering near those buried treasures was forbidden him. That pleasant home in Sea-spray was never to brighten or bloom for him. Foiled, frustrated in everything—banished even from the graves round which his heart lingered—he had been more or less than man had he forborne to mourn. He did mourn, in his loneliness, the concentrated bitterness of a lot so dreary! He heard the moaning voice of Ada in the room beneath him, and he covered his head that his ears should not drink in those forbidden sounds. He would not listen to his heart when it asked, "Did she think

of him?" He prayed God to silence its traitorous voice, when it prompted him to go to her, to bend over her, with the old-time loving look, and to comfort her with the old-time loving words. But he could not shut out the tones of her voice; for, as night drew on, her thoughts were wandering and her words were wild.

In her bewildered dreamings her cry was for "Walter," and "Edith," and "Ernest;" and Ellen was an unknown and unheeded stranger by her side.

"This will be too painful a position for Miss Atherton," remarked Dr. Hesselten (who was watching his patient) to Mr. Atherton. "She will be better at the hotel with you. There are kind ladies enough in the neighborhood who will cheerfully render all needed attendance. In the present unconscious state of our friend, your daughter's situation among entire strangers, however kind they may be, cannot be otherwise than distressing."

Ellen somewhat reluctantly acquiesced in the suggestion, and left with her father, resigning her post at her mother's bed-side to more practised and efficient occupants. De Koven took his station in Evelyn's room, to relieve Allen, and beguile the loneliness of the wearisome night-watchers.

Thus day glided after day, and under gentle and affectionate tenderness Evelyn gradually mended, and Ada as gradually declined. So the union brought about by suffering, sorrow and sin, suffering, sorrow and separation, drew nigh to dissolve.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

"So you are off this afternoon, De Koven?" remarked Hardy, one day, as they sat at dinner.

"I am," replied De Koven. "And truly, Hardy, my dear friend, I do regret sincerely this parting with you. I shall not soon find your fellow, I fear, for frank kind-heartedness, and up and down, fearless, independent honesty."

"Much obliged to you," said Hardy, actually blushing. "You are very complimentary."

"On my soul, Hardy, I feel all I say."

"Very well, let it go at that. So far as my intentions go, I am entitled to it. I endeavor to do my duty faithfully in all my official transactions. If my employers are satisfied, I am."

"I suspect, Captain," said Mrs. Godrick, gaily, "you will not insist upon Hardy's taking possession in the name of the state, as you proposed last winter? I am very much inclined to the belief, that you will prefer being left in the hands of the finder."

"Ah, Mrs. Godrick, why do you come to that conclusion?" said De Koven, coloring as he spoke.

"I assure you, I could give a very cogent reason for my

belief. Acknowledge now, that you have lost the wish to be cast into the public coffers."

"You are about right, Mrs. Godrick," said De Koven, laughing. "It is too late. The satchel strings were drawn over my head at Niagara. But, as I was not picked up in Hardy's district, his official honor is clear of impeachment."

"Ah, I was very confident that pretty little affair would come off before you were many years older," replied Mrs. Godrick, with a clear, ringing laugh, such as one's heart feels lighter for listening to. "But, really, I very much regret that you are to leave our village so soon. You have been so much confined with your friends, that you have not half taken the sense of its beauties. You must just come down and look at us again."

"I hardly dare look forward to another visit to Seaspray," said De Koven, with a sigh. "I fear I shall be considered a bird of ill omen: for in both instances I have been attended by death."

"Don't believe that thing at all," replied Mrs. Godrick. "We shall be perfectly delighted to see you, and that sweet, pretty Mrs. De — elect."

"We shall see what time will bring," said De Koven, rising; and, preparing their cigars, he and Hardy strolled out for a last friendly chat, and a quiet whiff in the orchard. Then, after brief cordial adieus to Hardy and his household, De Koven joined Evelyn to accompany him from Seaspray, and all that it held in sacred keeping.

Evelyn had nearly regained his ordinary health, and he came down equipped for travel, leaning on De Koven's arm, emaciated, pale and changed. His arrangements had all been settled in his room, with his kind friends Col. Hesselten and Mr. Alden; and nothing remained for him to do but nerve his heart for parting.

Ellen was sitting by Ada's bed-side keeping her silent watch, while Ada lay in a dozing, dreaming unconsciousness: attending when spoken to, but noticing little that was passing around her. Ellen had fallen on her knees by the bed-side, and was gently smoothing and parting the soft silken tresses over the pallid brow, when De Koven entered to speak a few parting words to Ada. He, also, sank on his knees, and taking the small hand in his, spoke soft and clear:

"Ada, I'm going. Will you not look up and bid me good-bye?"

Ada looked up. At that moment Atherton stepped up, behind them, and spread his hands in silent benediction over the heads of the kneeling pair. Ada saw and comprehended the action. A gleam of joy lighted up those large, loving eyes, whose lustrous beauty sickness and sorrow could not wholly dim.

Atherton led Ellen away, for a more painful sundering of long-knit ties was at hand. Then Ada spoke:

"Clarence De Koven! with the mother's example before your eyes, have you dared to love the child?"

"I have, dear Ada, why should I not?"

"And remembering that example, will you cherish, and love, and watch, and save her from an hour like this?"

"With all the powers God has given me, trust me, I will."

"Farewell, then, forever, dear Clarence. The blessing of a broken heart be upon you. Guard her, watch her, protect her from herself and her own heart. Farewell!"

Clarence clasped for a moment the thin hand in his, then left the room, and Ada was alone. But another form drew nigh, and her heart told her who.

"Ada," said that deep, full voice—"Ada!"

The dreamy eyes looked up, full of deep, deathless love to his.

"Ada, my poor stricken one, I could gladly watch by, and weep over and cherish you, with a love as pure and passionless as I gave to our dying child. But the still, small voice within me, speaking sternly to my sense of right, tells me it may not be."

"Now as ever, dear, blessed, generous Walter, noble, good and true. Go! I know it is right. I feel it is best. My last breath shall bless you. Walter, dear Walter, God, even your own God, bless and comfort you."

Laying his cold, trembling hand on her brow, he breathed one short, silent, agonized supplication over her, then turned away; and Evelyn and Ada had parted forever. The last drop of anguish in the bitter cup of his household overthrow was quaffed. With a gush of tears, as he bent his face to the soft locks of Allen, and a silent grasp of the hand to all, the parting passed, and Walter Evelyn was gone.

A few more fleeting days, and the frail, sinning, sorrowing Ada, the beloved of so many hearts, lifted once more the heavy lids from those deep, dark, loving eyes, and cast around one earnest, lingering, fond, farewell gaze, on faces and forms so anxiously bending over her; then smilingly closed them in their last, long slumber.

Life's bewildering dream was over. The sin that had shadowed, the sorrow that had smitten, the deep, passionate love that had betrayed, and the penitence that had purified, and brought peace and pardon to that parted soul, were over now, and ended. Atherton bent over her as

she lay in her cold and silent loveliness, redeemed from all her errors, and restored to her legitimate resting-place in his affections by the sanctifying touch of death. The frowning barrier, which human frailty had raised between them, death had thrown down, and he remembered only her young years of unsullied purity, and his trusting, early love. "It is right and best as it is, Ellen. Who but God could have so ordered and directed our steps, to stand by her dying pillow, and soothe her dying hours? It is all ordained in wisdom, that she should go to her rest here and now. Here, that she may be gathered to the same bed, beneath the same sod, with her children, now, while we could be with her. It would have been cruel to have left her lingering here alone. The duties which bind me to my people would have called me away, and we could not have taken her with us. I bless God, it is as it is."

Another grave was opened on that sunny-side hill. Again, over sweet, fading Sea-spray rung out that solemn old bell. Again on the still evening air rose the blessed words, "I am the resurrection and the life;" and Ada slept in her narrow bed, beside those little graves, and the ocean wave moaned on, and the sleepers did not heed.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THERE was nothing now to detain Atherton and Ellen, and they left, carrying with them lessons of wisdom and chastening remembrances; making their hearts heavier and holier, and teaching them charity and forgiving gentleness towards all who have erred and gone astray.

A few days after their departure came letters from Evelyn, and a package for Allen, containing a handsome Bible and Prayer Book, and an affectionate letter, in which he said in closing:

“Lundy has sailed in command of the Orphan, for Liverpool; and Clarence and I have taken passage in a steamer which leaves the fifteenth. I have buried my heart in Seaspray, and to you, dear Allen, I delegate the charge of those sacred graves. Visit them often for me, and let nothing evil or defiling come nigh them. It will not be long before I come back; for where my treasures are there will my heart be, and there would I be also. Let me hear from you, Allen, before I leave.”

EVELYN TO ALLEN.

THINK of him sometimes, when at silent eve
Thou retest from thy labors, and thy sports
Seem weary and distateful; when the hum
Of busy day is ended; when the birds

Have folded their bright wings, and the sweet flowers
 Have closed their dewy eyelids ; when the earth
 Is sleeping in the dreamy, drowsy light
 Of night's unwearied watchers, God's pure stars.
 When thy soul saddens in the holy hush,
 And solemn thoughts come o'er thee, let him claim
 Remembrance in thy musings, and a shrine
 Within the inner chambers of thy heart,
 Where, in thy young affections, he may hold
 A place, perfumed and hallowed by his presence.

Think of him sometimes — not with grief and gloom,
 But fondly — with deep feeling ; for he loved
 All sweet, and innocent, and gentle things,
 All that was pure and beautiful. The birds,
 The buds, the blossoms, the green, grassy knolls,
 The fields, the lone lanes, the deep, leafy dells,
 And the wild way-side flowers, the stars,
 The sunset clouds, the scented summer showers,
 The dashing billow moaning on the shore,
 The moon-light sleeping on the dewy sod,
 The rainbow, and the solemn meteor lights
 That gleam in the far north.

To him

All suffering, helpless, and weak things were dear.
 The wearied lambs, lost fledglings from the nest,
 The wounded and forsaken, in their need,
 Found shield and succor from his gentle hand,
 Pity and love from his young guileless heart,
 Which melted ever at the pleading tone,
 Or tremulous, low accent of the sad,
 While answering moisture trembled on his lids,
 Whene'er a sorrowing or tearful eye
 Lifted its mute, appealing glance to his.

Not when thy mood is mirthful, and gay speech,
 Provoking laughter from thy merry mates,
 Rings on thy lips : Oh, not when noisy jests,
 And bursts of merriment, and song, and glee,
 And trials of rude strength, amuse the hour :

Not then, not there, he uttered his loved name,
Nor mingled with ungentle play-ground sports
Be heartless or unguarded speech of him.

But when thou art world-weary, and thy thoughts
Turn sadly to the past ; when buried dreams
Are stirring the deep fountains of thy heart,
Waking its slumbering sorrows ; when subdued
And chastened feeling sobers thy young brow—
Then think of him, who, in his stainless bloom,
Closed his blue eyes at evening, and in peace,
Folding his little hands in patient trust,
Died, murmuring, “ Our Father.” Then, if tears
Spring to thine eyes unbidden, for his sake,
Bethink thee that thy blessed Saviour wept,
And that thy tears are sinless — let them flow.

It was sad, dull times for Allen. But he gave due heed to the request of his friend, and made frequent little pilgrimages to what he considered Holy Land. At length it was November ; and recollecting what he had heard Evelyn and Ada tell of the beautiful scenes they had witnessed two years before in New-Orleans, he gathered a variety of rich autumnal flowers, and took them with him to decorate the graves of the friends he had so dearly loved.

Sitting down, on his return, he wrote a short, child's letter to Evelyn, with the thoughts his occupation had awakened, simply woven into verse :

ALL-SAINTS' DAY, SEA-SPRAY, NOVEMBER FIRST.

Oh, ne'er went pilgrim saint to lay
Gifts on a holier shrine,
Than that which weeping love to-day
Comes forth with flowers to twine ;

Bringing bright blossoms, bud and wreath,
To deck the sacred mould,—
Sweet types of those who sleep beneath,
In stainless beauty cold.

Come not unto the hallowed spot,
Where the shrouded sleepers rest,
When one unholy, murmuring thought,
Is warring within thy breast ;
But come when thy life looks dim,
When tears to thine eyelids swell,
Looking in trembling trust to Him,
Who hath ordered all things well.

Come, when the rosy flush
Tinges the waves with light,
As morning springs, with a mantling blush,
From the dewy couch of night.
Come, when the hymn of the early bird,
Floats meadow and moor along ;
When the soul of the insect world is stirred
To pour out its joy in song.

Come to the loved one's grave,
When the stars are on the sea ;
When evening's balmy dew drops lave,
Grey hedge and grassy lea ;
When the soaring trill, when the low, sweet note,
Of the winged choir is hushed ;
And the carol sleeps in the silvery throat
Whence those flute-like warblings gushed.

Come, when the wave is still,
That moaned along the shore,
When the breezes, fainting on the hill,
Lift their light wings no more.
Come, when the glow of the sun-set hour,
Lies red on roof and trec,
Lighting the panes in the old church tower,
With a glorious radiancy.

Come, though it wearies thee here to wait,
And weep, when thine idols die,
Pining to pass through the grave's green gate,
To their beautiful homes on high ;
Yet, come to the hallowed spot,
Where the bright-browed sleepers lie,—
Perchance, though thou seest them not,
They are bending in beauty nigh.

CHAPTER XXXV.

NOVEMBER has come, chill and cold, and "election" has come in her train. Election—that glorious one day in the year, when all men are equal, and every man a king; when the sovereign people arise in the might and the majesty of their manhood, those "setters up, and pullers down" of Presidents, to lift their omnipotent voices through that little chink in the ballot-box, and decide who, for the next four years, shall preside over the destinies of this mighty republic. Truly, it would be a magnificent affair, if one could stand afar off on the mountain top, and listen to the concentrated voice of these myriads of freemen, as it comes up from the mighty mass, rolling and thundering along the courses of rivers, gathering power and volume in its course over cultured plains, and through fertile valleys, ringing and swelling over lakes, prairies, and primeval forests, booming and reverberating among green hills and granite mountains—borne upon the mist from sterile beaches and sandy ocean shores, and coming up over all obstructions, in one tremendous, triumphant, deafening peal. But bring it down to the little sectional, village poll reality; just stand behind the "Town House" door, and look through the crack, and it dwindles to quite a little "sucking-dove" concern. Man in the abstract, and man in the mighty aggregate, assume very

different phases, and the voice of the "sovereign" sounds very different when close to the ear, from the sublime chorus which ascends to the wrapt imaginary listener on the mountain top. Nevertheless, death and the ballot-box are mighty and merciless levelers; and when the grave or the poll opens, men meet as equals. That little bit of paper, held so daintily in the jeweled fingers of the lordly inheritor of broad acres and bright eagles, will count no more on the great day when the inspectors shall make up their canvass, than the soiled and crumpled scrap clutched in the grey, horny fist of his sable fellow-elect and compeer.

It was a dismal, rainy day, that last election day now under consideration, and Leena and Alice had ensconced themselves by Dury's comfortable kitchen fire, when a clumsy step was heard in the outer kitchen, and good, old Lester Bennet made his entrance, wet and cold:

"Good day—good day tew ye—how d'ye dew? Kin ye let the ole critter kinder thaw out his trotters 'long side o' your herth a few minutes? Its rale cold out."

"This is a wet day for election, Uncle Lester. I am afraid it will prevent people coming out," said Alice, making room for the old man by the fire. "Get as near the fire as you can. I am afraid you are cold now."

"La! bless your dear, little soul, child, no, I aint—I'm as happy as a clam."

"I suppose you have got in your vote?" said Leena.

"Sartain, child, sartain. Them air youngsters over there, they're wide awake; and they begun to pull and haul, but I tell'd 'em I know'd how to vote afore their fathers was born, the sassy sarpsents. One was for temperance, and one was for this fiddle-faddle, and t'other was for that. But I tell'd 'em 'twant no use. I know'd noth-

in' about their hunkers, nor barn-burners, nor no sich. I was a reg'lar, old-fashioned, Jackson-Van Buren dimmy-cratt, and I was gonter have a hand in makin' one more president o' the right sort o' stuff; and eff we don't git one this time, th'aint no snakes. Them dare-devil varmints, they've got a wagin now, and driv off, full tilt, to the poor-house, arter the porposses. Them poor humans, they git a ride once a year, sartin. Well, I'll jest go 'long now, for I've got to jog off a pretty good stretch for a poor, lame, worn out, good-for-nothin' ole critter. The Lord be with you;" — and the old man took his long, crooked walking stick, and turned his face toward home. The rain came down in showers, and the sun looked out, at times, with a wan and watery gleam, and was clouded and shone again, and finally went down, and election was over, and staunch little Sea-spray had done her devoir right valiantly in the great work of giving the great republic a new president, besides sundry other little achievements of secondary consideration, over all of which she was serenely and soberly exultant.

"Does Miss Leena think folks allus is gwine right straight up to good place juss 'cause they says they be?" asked Dury, quietly moistening the husks, with which she was braiding foot-mats.

"Not because they say so, Dury. But what are you thinking of now, that you ask such a question?"

"Cause I niver know'd as was inythink wrong there, and I was thinkin' eff Miss Thorn got there, she woul'n't be comf'ble eff she couldn't be findin' fault 'bout suthink 'rother;" and Dury gave way to a subdued inward chuckle at the idea of Mrs. Thorn being brought to a non plus: "Guh! she aint got there yet. She needn't be so dreffle crank with her invites."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE bloom and verdure of Sea-spray had faded. The summer birds and the summer visitors had flown, and silence and solitude settled over the scenes they had occupied and enlivened. The old forest trees, that shelter the little brown structure that Dick Brown calls "ow'-house," stand sere and leafless, their long gray arms creaking and moaning, as the north wind passes coldly up from the bay. Dick and Judy are dosing away by the kitchen fire-side. The jug has not been replenished in some days; and though they are both somewhat afflicted with a touch of their peculiar maladies, they are neither of them so plentifully saturated with their favorite specific as they would like to be. So Judy knits a little, and takes a pinch of snuff to enliven life, and Dick puts his feet on the crane up the chimney, and with his chin on his breast, listens drowsily to the conversation between Mary and Lyme. And Mary sings, and works, and reads her Bible and Hymn Book, and goes to singing and prayer meetings, and helps Lyme with his lessons; keeping cheerfully and contentedly and conscientiously to the discharge of her duties. Lyme has not forgotten yet that desolate night on the sea, when he first learned the blessedness of that training which teaches the helpless and desolate the way of truth, and gives them

language to "call upon the Lord." And he battles valiantly with old evil habits, and tries constantly, and earnestly and honestly to "be a good boy."

Sam Listen goes occasionally to spend an evening with Greenfield, the bustling "boss" builder, and asks round-about questions about the cost of lumber, and lime, and brick, and there is a shrewd guessing "along down the road," that he will build a snug little cage next summer, and coax "Dick's canary" to sing on the perch.

Henry Marven has gone that long voyage to the dreary Arctic seas; and single-minded, straight-forward, practical Anna Belden sings in her father's home, and makes it happy; and knits, and makes "tidies" and patch-work, and hunts the district library for books that treat of northern regions, and ice-bergs, and polar oceans, and whale fishing in general; and dreams about "Sir John Franklin" and the "Lost sailors," but never speaks an impatient word, nor thinks an impatient thought; feeding the hungry and clothing the naked, nursing the sick and comforting the afflicted, moving about in her simple, unobtrusive goodness, like a stray sun-beam, shining in through chinks and crevices, to cheer and gladden the destitute homes and dark corners of the earth; never dreaming that she is making out her claim to a high place among the inheritors of the promised beatitudes.

It is pleasant autumn twilight now in Isaac Austin's home. The work of the short, busy day is done. The doors are shut, and they have settled to their pleasant evening's occupation. Ailsie has her knitting-work in her hands, and her foot on the cradle; and Austin is regulating the clock. Jim is re-reading "Queechy" aloud, for the benefit of Sam Listen, who, with his face turned a little

away from the reader, is winking little, short, fidgety winks to keep the tears from blinding, while he sand-papers his new axe-helve, preparatory to his felling campaign among the mossy old fathers of the "sciences."

Steenie is husking his winter store of chicken corn, twisting his round, curly head on one side, and screwing on a "real stout" look, as he tugs at an obstinate knob. They had been talking of Ernest, and of the new boat his gift; and Steenie once more put forth his unsolved question, recalled by association with Ernest:

"Say, now, Father, who was the baddest man?"

Isaac Austin was not quite certain that the Bible might not tell, and it would be a burning shame for him not to know; so he held his peace in prudent non-committal. But Ailsie looked down on the little new-comer, sleeping in its cradle, and up at her honored husband, as he stood winding the old dark-cased clock in the corner, and round on Jim, at his patient "labor of love," and Steenie, in his provident innocence, and out upon the graves of her garnered treasures; and she said, her heart swelling in the fulness of its grateful, chastened joy:

"It is the man, Steenie, who, though 'crowned with mercies and loving kindnesses,' never thanks God."

It was a dark November night—for there were dark nights sometimes even in Sea-spray, famous as she is for "moonshine,"—the wind howled in gusts, and the rain came down in fitful sheets; occasionally slacking up, in deceitful promise of ceasing, and then pouring again, and drenching the unlucky wight who had been deluded into venturing

out. Allen had seated himself with a book, and Leena and Alice had drawn close to the fire to listen, while their father read aloud the election news from the "Post." The shaking of a cloak and umbrella in the office heralded a visitor, and Mr. Alden entered, with his usual cordial salutations.

"This is a wet night to be out, Mr. Alden," said the Colonel, laying aside his paper, and advancing to meet his guest.

"Very uncomfortable, Colonel, very uncomfortable; but I was particularly anxious to hear from the mail, so I just thought I would step down. I have a short note from our friend Evelyn, and I thought I would drop in and tell you. He left, I suppose, yesterday, was in good health, and wrote in tolerably good spirits. You do not imagine this storm will inconvenience him, Colonel?" asked the pastor.

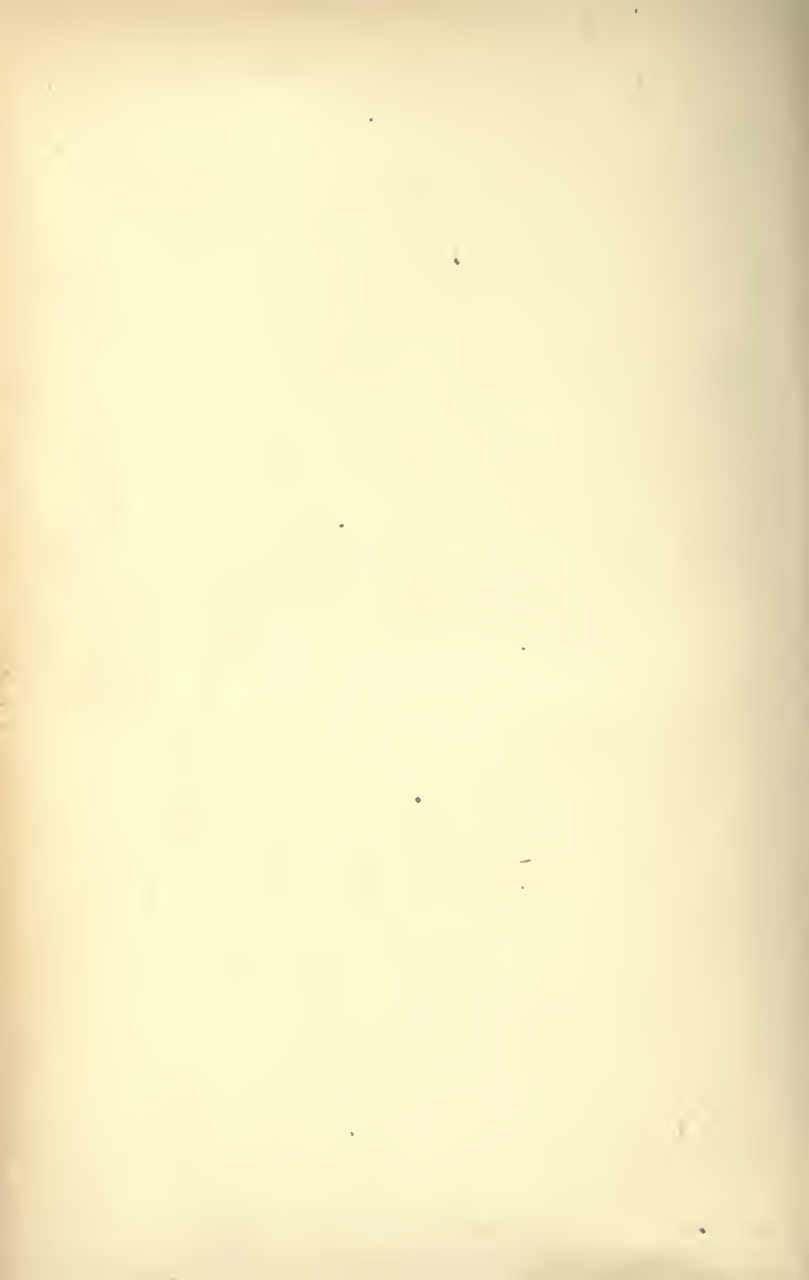
"Hardly! It is not very severe—they have probably outrun it. It is very much like the storm which sent him here—except that it is not so sudden."

"By the way, Dalton has got home. He tells me poor Copperly laid down the weary burden of life soon after he was removed from Sea-spray, only praying to be permitted to sleep and be at rest. Mrs. Copperly in her zeal for 'emancipation' and 'progression,' leaving him to die, while she followed her 'vocation' of attending Conventions, and carrying out measures for amelioration and reform. The children, having been weighed in the balance against that more imperative duty, and found wanting, were handed over to grandmother Copperly. Miss Psyche has resumed her less ambitious name of Hannah, and grown more tractable and gracious under the influence of better example and more judicious training."

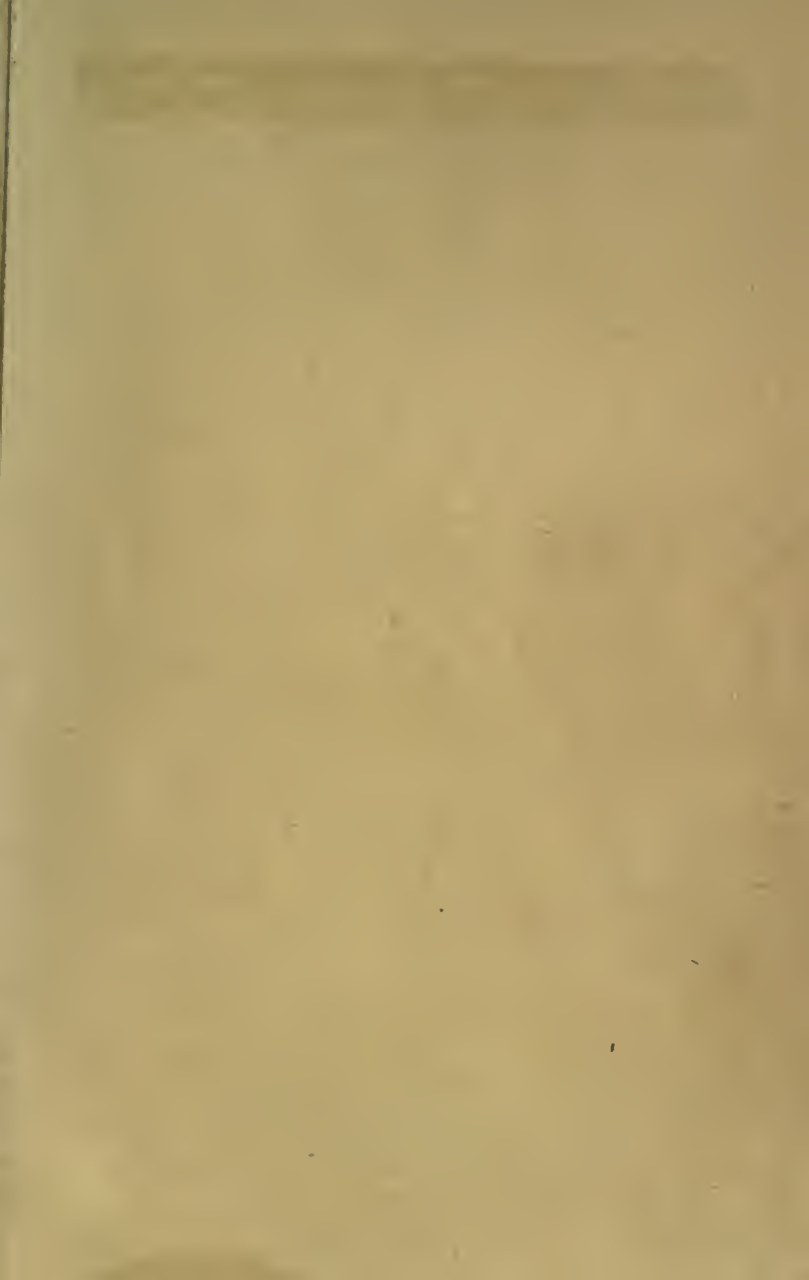
“That is one of those cases of suffering and domestic unhappiness for which there seems no excuse. But it is wrong perhaps to say so, for almost all cases of sorrow and miserable destruction of human peace, are traceable to the follies or vices of some one individual,” said Alice, thinking more particularly of Evelyn.

“Very true—very true—there is little unhappiness in this life for which sin in some shape is not accountable. There is sickness, sorrow, and death, of course, in innumerable cases, which no aggravating circumstances embitter; but in instances like these before us, we cannot fail to see the footprints of sin. It teaches us all a lesson which we shall find it profitable to study—for it behooves us all, ‘when we think we stand, to take heed lest we fall,’ remembering the scriptural injunction, ‘Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.’”

I CAST thee on the waters—go thou forth,
Dim written record of a fireside dream !
Albeit thy words, I wot, are little worth,
And on thy page no gems of wisdom gleam ;
If thou from care one weary heart beguile,
Making less lone one lonely hearth the while ;
If thou one foot, brief time, from error wile,
Though small the meed the nameless dreamer gain,
Thou wilt not make thy venturous voyage in vain.







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